

P.523/344

spare Rib

a women's liberation magazine
december issue 65 35pence

LOOK!
no belts
no pins
no pads



The Sanitary
Protection
Racket

Pornography-see PAGE THREE ...and page 45

Hounslow Hospital, raid and rally

What did you do today, dear? see pages 28&29

off,
Housewives
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or much money; must be willing to do
everything. Housewives preferred.

Further info
inside

advertisements

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TUESDAY—29 November

3pm Opening of Women's
Festival '77.

6.30 Mass Media Evening: Tele-
vision and Video.

WEDNESDAY—30 November

1.10 'Mal de Mer' + 'Swallows'
by Michelene Wandor.

2.30 Workshop: Working Class
Women and the Suffragist Move-
ment/Has anything changed in 60
years?

7.00 Music Event: Victoria Wood

8.00 'Voices'—a play by Susan
Griffin.

THURSDAY—1 December

1.10 'Who Are The Guinea
Pigs?', Michele Frankel and
Melanie Thompson

2.30 Natural Dance workshop
with Anna Wise

4.30 Discussion about Pros-
titution

7.00 Music event: Margot Sagov

8.00 'Voices'

8.00 Films: 'Pride of Place' by
Dorothea Gazidis & Kim Land-
seer, 'Trip Round Jenny' by Dina
Hecht

FRIDAY—2 December

1.10 'Who Are The Guinea Pigs?'

2.30 Women and Health Work-
shop

5.00 Women Against Rape work-
shop

7.30 Music Event: Janie, Andrea,
Tierl, Gillian, Pam 8.30 'Voices'

10.30 Late night music: Terri
Quaye's MoonSpirit + Ova

SATURDAY—3 December

11.00 Women's Liberation Music
Workshop (Women Only). 11.00—
Voice, 12.30—Guitar acoustic/
electric bass, 1.30 PA equip-
ment, 2.30—Percussion 3.30—
Discussion.

1.10 'Mal de Mer' and 'Swallows'

5.30 'Voices' Matinee

7.30 Music Event: Clapperclaw

8.30 'Voices' 10.30 Terri Quaye's
MoonSpirit + Ova

SUNDAY—4 December

2.00 Cream Teas and classical
music with Juliet Davey (violin),
Susan Bricknell (viola) and Muriel
Davey (piano).

2.30 Children's workshop with
Rix Pyke, Iris Walton and Jan
Dungey

3.30 Women and Violence work-
shop

7.00 Music Event: Saffron
Summerfield

8.00 'Voices'

TUESDAY—6 December

1.10 'Women and Dance' with
Emilyn Claid, Jacky Lansley and
Mary Prestige

2.30 Lesbian Sexuality workshop
(Women Only)

6.45 'The Hourglass' by Jane
Wibberly

8.00 Mass Media evening:
Publishing

WEDNESDAY—7 December

1.10 'Pretty Ugly'—The
Women's Theatre Group

2.30 Women and Work work-
shop

7.00 Music Event: Victoria Wood
(see 30 Nov.)

8.00 'Voices'—a play by Susan
Griffin

8.00 Films: 'The Hour of Libera-
tion' by Heiny Srour, 'The Sand-
wich' and 'Horse of Mud' by Atiat
Abnoudi.

THURSDAY—8 December

1.10 'Pretty Ugly'

2.30 Children and Parents
workshop

7.00 Music Event: Maggie Nicols

8.00: 'Voices'

8.00 Films: 'The Legacy' by
Karen Arthur

FRIDAY—9 December

1.10 'Pretty Ugly' (see 7 Dec.)

2.30 Elizabeth Garrett Anderson
Hospital Stays OK.

4.30 Wages for Housework:
Discussion

7.30 Music Event: Clapperclaw

8.30 'Voices' 10.30 Late night
music: Jam Today

SATURDAY—10 December

10—4 Craft Day

11.00 Writers' Workshop (Women
Only). 11.00—Discussion e.g.
women and myth, playwriting and
poetry and dance. 2.00—Perform-
ances/readings by individuals and
groups. 4.00—Performance by
Paris Women's Writers' Workshop

(English Speaking), 5.00—Discus-
sion to end Writers' Workshop.

5.30 'Voices' Matinee

7.30 Music Event: Frankie
Armstrong, Sandra Kerr.

8.30 'Voices'

10.30 Late night music: Jam
Today.

SUNDAY—11 December

2.00 Cream Teas and classical
music with the Adelphi String
Quartet

2.30 Cool clowns and crackpot
children's workshop with Anne-
marie Sweeney and Jane Kelly.

4.00 Older women + handi-
capped women's workshop

7.00 Music Event: Janie, Andrea,
Tierl + Gillian. 8.00 'Voices'

TUESDAY—13 December

1.10 'Women and Dance' with
Emilyn Claid, Jacky Lansley &
Mary Prestige + workshop

4—6 Anarchist Feminist work-
shop

6—8 Matriarchy and Goddess
workshop

6.30 Mass Media evening: Film

WEDNESDAY—14 December

1.10 'Bouncing Back' Pirate
Jenny TEAM TWO

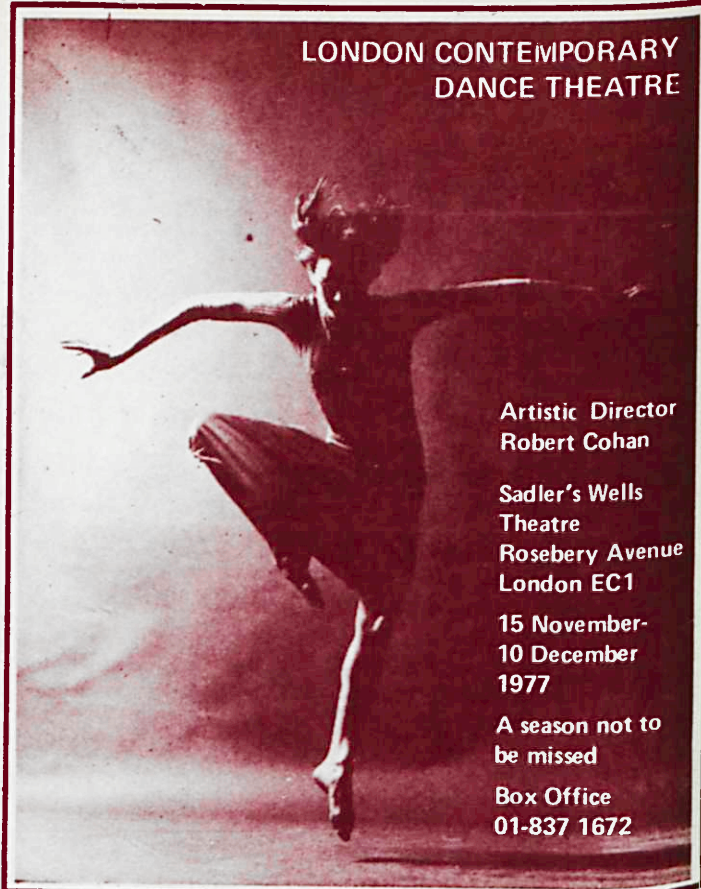
2.30 Women and Abortion
workshop

7.00 Music event: Margot
Sagov (see 1 Dec.)

8.00 'Voices' a play by Susan
Griffin

8.00 Films: 'Wives' by Anje
Breien and 'Swiss Graffiti' by
Jacqueline Vauve and Monique
Renault

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THURSDAY—15 December

1.10 'Bouncing Back' Pirate Jenny
TEAM TWO

2.30 Female Sexuality workshop
(Women Only)

5.00 Birth centre workshop—
Alternative birth methods

7.00 Music Event: Saffron
Summerfield (see 4 Dec.)

8.00 'Voices'

8.00 Films: 'To the People of
the World' by Women's Film
Collective, 'Women of Marrakesh'
by Women's Film Crew Granada
TV, 'The Double Day' by Inter-
national Women's Film Project.

FRIDAY—16 December

1.10 'Dancing—Naturally!' a
participatory performance by
Anna Wise

2.30 Third World Women ...
Irish Women ... Black Women ...
workshop

7.30 Music Event: Frankie
Armstrong 8.30 'Voices'

10.30 Late music: Meg Christian
+ Teresa Trull

SATURDAY—17 December

11.00 Visual Arts Workshop
(Women Only)—11.00—'Women's

Practice in Art' by Susan Hiller
and Mary Kelly + Audio Tape &
Slides, 11.40—Film + Talk with
Monica Sjoo, 12.15—Slides + Talk
with Catherine Elwes and Annie
Wright, 12.45—'Shadow Women'
performance with film by Tina
Keane, 2.00—'International
Women's Exhibition' in Berlin—
slides + talk with Women's Artists'
Collective + Margaret Harrison &
Jane Low, 4.00—'A Litany for
Women Artists' by Hannah O'Shea.

5.30 'Voices' Matinee 7.30 Music:
Ova 8.00 'Voices' 10.30 Meg
Christian and Teresa Trull.

SUNDAY—18 December

2.00 Cream Teas and classical
music with Joyce Nixon (violin) and
Catherine Wilmers (cello).

2.30 Under fives' show by Side-
walk Theatre Co

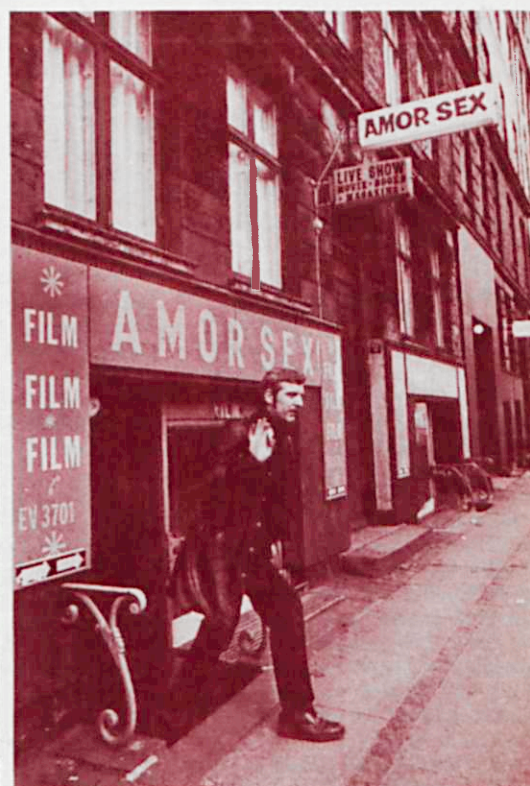
4.00 Readings 'New Portuguese
Letters' by the Three Marias.

5.00 'Women's Festival '77' invites
all women to discuss Festival and
future plans.

7.00 Music Event: Lindsey Cooper
and Friends.

8.00 'Voices' (1½ hours)—After:
Festival Jam.

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Turn to page 44 and find out why this man might be ashamed to show his face.

photos taken in Denmark by Maggi Murray

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Fascist punk?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

Our experience of punk has been really bad. A local punk band, The Accelerators, offered to play at a benefit for two people who'd been busted, one of whom was in the women's movement, so a lot of movement women were there. One of the band was wearing a patch on his clothes saying 'All women's libbers are cunts'. The volume of the music was so loud that there was no possibility of talking together. One of us went and tipped a pint of beer over the player's head. She was attacked by the singer, as a result of which she had to have 20 stitches in her face. The band carried on playing and their music became even more aggressive. The other women from the movement left.

Was one of us right in acting on her own initiative in such a situation? Some people saw it as a personal, not a political, act. It has been looked at as a trivial incident magnified out of all proportion by hypersensitive feminists. We don't think that a band with such an anti-women attitude should be playing at alternative or left-wing events. If the band had displayed equivalent racist sentiments what would the reaction have been?

It seems difficult to discuss the relationship between direct sexism and the way music is performed. Still, we don't think that the volume at which the music is played, the aggressiveness of the sound and rhythm and the violence in the gestures of the lead singer are separable from a contemptuous and subordinating attitude to women.

Just because something is against established authority doesn't seem to us to mean that it should be regarded as progressive. For us, the sounds and mannerisms of punk rock are an expression of fascism in music and we want nothing whatever to do with it.

In sisterhood,
Anne Cunningham, Carol Riddell,
Liverpool 8.

... or just noisy rock'n'roll?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I play rhythm guitar with The Accelerators. On August 2, we played a benefit gig and several of the Merseyside Women's Action Group (WAG) were present. Some of them persisted in haranguing the drummer's girlfriend because of the sexy clothes she was wearing. He reacted by writing a slogan on his overalls, which read 'All women's lib. are cunts'.

In the middle of our first number, one of the WAG, Ms Tasker, walked onto the stage and poured a glass of beer over Brian, his drums, and a plugboard. He hit her once, and Chris, the singer, bundled her offstage. Some of her friends rushed forward, one of them wielding a mikestand. In the brief fracas Ms Tasker's face

Spare Rib
27 Clerkenwell Close
London E.C.1

* indicates that letters have been cut for reasons of space.

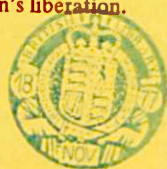
was cut, either by the glass she was originally holding, or by one held by one of her friends. No-one in the band was holding a glass. We later learned that she had to have 20 stitches.

The WAG has been trying to make things hard for The Accelerators. They influenced the Merseyside Area Students Association to propose a motion to ban us from local colleges. Now a nationwide NUS ban is being requested. Isn't democracy wonderful?

We were requested to play a benefit gig for Rock Against Racism (RAR) at a local pub. We arrived to find a picket line of feminists outside, urging people not to see the "sexist" Accelerators. All the wrangling delayed us and we didn't get to play. The WAG may see this as a blow for women's liberation. I see it as a blow against RAR and as a blow against rock'n'roll.

No-one in the band denies that the slogan Brian wore was offensive to some, but we refuse to let anyone dictate our individual opinions. We defend the right of the band to wear any slogans they want and will always abhor censorship, be it from Mary Whitehouse or extremist feminists. We see Ms Tasker's act as physical censorship.

It is sad that the WAG's campaign has totally ignored the music itself. My political stand is to play a dirty, noisy, rock'n'roll guitar. But the WAG wants to silence the band I play in. What a great step forward for women's liberation. Yours sincerely,
Kathy,
Liverpool 8.



Brainy

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

In *SR* 64 you uncritically reported that "Brains are getting heavier, especially the male kind". This item referred, I assume, to the recently published study of autopsy reports 1860-1940 from The London Hospital. This study also points out that after 1900 the average brain-weight of women increased at a faster rate than that of men.

But, so what! There is no proven connection between brain-weight and anything else—most certainly not with intelligence, however hard some investigators have worked for it. In any case, it is thought that no-one uses more than a small part of their brain capacity, so why worry about a few grams here or there.

There is a relationship between brain-weight and total body-weight and it is roughly comparable in women and men.

This explains why men's brains are heavier.

By reporting this sort of study without comment you are reinforcing women's fears and phobias about intellectual powers. The popular press often increases women's fears by its reporting of medical investigations. You should know better, and be more careful about accuracy and assessment of such reports.

Yours sincerely,
Alison Waghorne,
Leeds.

The report was meant to be ironic.

The power of a class

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

While I support wholeheartedly the opening up of discussion on class in the women's movement, I can only feel downhearted at its first airing in *SR* 63.

When I think of class, I think of a dynamic, active thing, not a subjective feeling like inferiority or superiority. I work in an office, my father worked in a factory when I was younger, but I would be described in the terms of the article as middle class due to my education, life-style, aspirations. However my relationship with the working class is not subjective or condescending, it is a political one. I don't feel guilty or separate. I use my 'privileged' position to take part in the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation. I work in my trade union and in a political party for the interests of the working class, women and men. In my view this is the only way of transcending a totally isolated and individualistic position where subjectivity can rule supreme and divide.

While many criticisms made of the movement and women within it ring very true, the conclusions and feelings drawn from them are so negative. The alienation many feel is not just a problem of class differences but more concretely one of bad politics or perhaps lack of any politics.

This sounds very damping but I feel the women's movement now is in crisis on this very issue. Man-hating, and an almost religious belief in the personal being the political has meant the gradual distancing of the movement from any organised collective politics which after all is the tradition of the working class. If women feel they can't communicate the revolutionary ideas of women's liberation to "the woman in the baker's shop" it is not really because the ideas are in "middle class language".

Ideas are not often spread in conversation. Ideas are experienced as living reality in struggle, be it in the internal struggle of a consciousness raising group or in the collective struggle of the picket line. In the same way class cannot have a meaning as a feeling, only as a living collective reality. An individual can feel powerless but a class can have power when it draws together consciously to wield it.

Now that through the movement we have gained some faith in ourselves as human beings and have the potential strength to spring into action to change things (as we have begun to do already in so many ways) we must begin to escape from introspection and turn ourselves to united public action.

Yours in sisterhood,
Joan Curtis,
London N7.

The power of having rich parents

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I thought that the article on working class women (*SR* 63) was quite good. It raised a lot of good points to think about, and it was good to read about other working class women's experiences inside the women's movement. I had the same trouble myself when I joined, but I learned all the big words and the jargon and it took me five hard work-years to do it, and I am glad that I stuck at it. I have learned about oppression, and politics, and most of all I learned that women working together can be bloody powerful whatever their class. In every movement you get people who will jump on for the ride, and I also have met them type in the women's movement, but to be honest about it, they don't bother me, but at the same time I would hope that the women's movement would help them to change their sloppy way of thinking as it changed us. What I am trying to say is this, I think that the women's movement is for all of us, whatever our class, but we as working class women have it that bit harder, because we have to learn all the new words, and yes we do get cross when we learn about who is kidding us (the ruling classes).

We have that to fight as well as male oppression, and it is pissy offy when someone walks up to you after a hard week's work, and asks you for a lend of a fiver, and you know in your heart and soul that they have parents that are filthy rich, and you know damn well that they are on the dole cos it's the in-thing to do, but I have also met the opposite to that, I have come across women in the movement who have been very rich, and have given money away to groups that needed it very badly, and not gone and dropped out feeling guilty about their wealth. To those women I say

right on and to the ones who run about feeling guilty about their rich parents, I say get in there and get some and give it to groups that are in great need of funds. We could all do with a few bob. Luchia Fitzgerald, Manchester.

How to make money

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am in sympathy with the cause. Coming from a working class background and having had little education, I decided in my 40s to do something about it and make a new career. I left the grotty office job, went to Hillcroft College, then on to the Polytechnic of North London to do my English degree, and from there to Leeds to do a PG teaching course. Well guess what! I'm signing on for the first time in my life! I seem to have two alternatives, low paid work—suitable for women—and the dole. I don't know if it's discrimination about my age—bound to be menapausal—or my working class background, or just the unorthodoxy of my conduct. How dare she try to beat the system!

Any suggestions for making money would be welcomed. In sisterhood,
Jean Barker, Leeds.

Disappointed animators

Dear *Spare Rib*,
After reading the article about *The Nursery Film* (SR 64) we feel you have omitted what to us are the most positive and significant aspects of our project. We are grateful for the coverage you gave the film, but disappointed that several hours' discussion has been edited so as to give such a misleading impression of the group's basic aims. The only quotes that have been singled out give a false emphasis, highlighting the speaker's domestic situation and portraying her as simply a bored mother who needed a hobby to provide her with "personal expression".

Perhaps we could briefly indicate the points we hoped the article would bring out. Firstly, the film industry, and particularly the animation side, is almost entirely profit-centred and hierarchical, and dominated by individualist and sexist values. Art training and the commercial art world encourage this, and even those projects which are funded by public money through arts council grants have, almost without exception, failed to challenge the traditional elitist assumptions about 'Art'. Our group, on the other hand, is trying to make a positive contribution by demystifying the processes of our art-form, sharing skills and attempting to work collectively.

We have also deliberately chosen a style which makes no attempt to be 'original' or arty, but which will be accessible to the widest possible

audience, and hopefully will mean that our film is of some practical use.

Secondly, to encourage any women who might be thinking of undertaking a similar project, we'd like to stress that although our group has had the benefit of some members' professional experience, we got together in an almost haphazard way. For instance, though we enjoy working as an all-women group, we never made a decision to be one—it just happened that way. Our only essential common denominator is socialism, and the wish to make a political statement which will also present a non-sexist, anti-racist image. In sisterhood,
The Nursery Film Group
Leeds 2

Laura Margolis (SR collective) replies:

I felt angry after reading your letter. Mostly because you had the opportunity of writing the article yourselves which was not possible due to lack of time and energy when you were in London.

The first draft came out of an interview with two members of your group and was very unclear. It needed a lot of work, at the end of which I phoned Leeds and discussed all the changes and further additions. When the piece was finalised a copy went to Leeds. You phoned to add an extra bit about the amount of money required to finish the film and criticised the lack of socialist content in the article, but made no concrete suggestions then.

And two points about your letter. Firstly, you never explained clearly why you chose that particular style of drawing—you seem to be saying that the message of the film is what's important, so you chose a 'familiar' cartoon style to put over your socialist ideas at the expense of experimenting with other animation techniques. That's ok—as long as you understand the importance of other people developing and questioning different forms. I do personally worry that you feel 'originality' will put people off.

It also disturbs me that you want to play down the positive aspects of women working together, especially as the content of The Nursery Film can blend socialism perfectly well with feminism.

Too much English news

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I don't know if the following observation is a result of living abroad, but I find the magazine lately has less 'content' and more 'news', especially local news. Evidently this English news is not terribly relevant out here and I wish there were more solid articles on things like sexuality, the couple, children, male chauvinism, abortion, personal experiences ("A day in the life of..." was good) etc. Also I have enjoyed the fiction in the magazine very much.

Love,
Sara,
Bogota, Colombia,
South America.

Moving into hot water

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I liked most of the issue this month (SR 64), and did feel that the news was better distributed throughout. I certainly feel also that you should run an article on radical feminism and similar topics, rather than just factual reports, though these, too, are useful. Your interview on working class women was a start in this direction. It's essential to discuss some of the political theories and tactics of the women's liberation movement—although, of course, that is moving into hot water. But it would make *Spare Rib* more interesting, and would not necessarily alienate women new to the movement (I presume that is one of the arguments against dealing with topics such as radical feminism).

One thing I must say—I can't understand why you have printed 'A Boon for Womankind' instead of 'A Women's Liberation Magazine', in the top right hand corner. This seems misleading and coy—why cut out the statement of what you are? Or was it meant to be a joke?! (Ed: Yes it was a joke and a one-off thing. It referred to the article on abortion in Victorian and Edwardian England on page 38 of the issue.)

Take care,
Caroline Gillfillan,
London E1

Window on Soweto

We'd like to thank you for the review of Joyce Sikakane's book *Window on Soweto* (SR 63). The publications programme of International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) aims to bring information about the oppression of people in Southern Africa to as wide an audience as possible, and *Spare Rib's* readership is an important part.

However, the reviewer displayed certain misconceptions which, as Joyce's editor, I feel should be corrected.

Firstly, Joyce was commissioned by IDAF to write a book on Soweto, the largest and most representative of South Africa's black townships, which were among the least known but most important (as in 1976 events proved) features of the South African situation. She did not wish to write an autobiography, but during the time she was preparing the material on Soweto it became clear that her personal experience and family history illuminated aspects of the apartheid system in a vivid manner. Thus, at my suggestion, the book evolved into its final and uniquely valuable form as a mixture of the autobiographical and the general.

Secondly, Joyce did not write on the legal position of women in African society, as Ann Oosthuizen complains, because she was asked to write about life in Soweto, not in the reserves. Similarly with the Natal Code. Both these matters are in fact dealt with in a previous IDAF publication, *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears: Women In Apartheid South Africa* (a revised edition of this is due out in 1978).

Your reviewer is of course entitled to her own views on the relative priorities of destroying racist/sexist/class oppression but one thing Joyce's book does show very clearly is how Black South African women have emerged as strong, independent and self reliant, fighting against apartheid in their daily lives and in the resistance movement. That some of their independence is the result of the harsh measures, such as the poverty wages and the hated pass laws which split up families, imposed on Africans by the apartheid

continued on page 20

bop with spare rib and
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Blood MONEY

REGD. TRADE MARK

Most of us are going to menstruate 300 times in our lives. You'd never guess, though. In fact it's one of the world's best-kept secrets. We talk in code: it's The Curse in middle-class boarding schools, Uncle George in the North, Red Sails in the Sunset in Australia. Everywhere, "women still buy sanitary towels with enormous discretion and carry their handbags to the loo when they only need to carry a napkin". (G. Greer). No wonder one poor woman who asked her husband to bring her sanitary towels and a belt when she was in hospital ended up with a lace suspender belt and a packet of Brillo pads.

The menstrual period's no joke, though. It still means seven days' absolute seclusion for women in Moslem, Hindu and orthodox Jewish cultures. Fear and hatred of the female body are one obvious reason why this is still happening. But there's also a technology of menstruation which we don't think about so often and which has just as controlling an effect on our lives. In some countries women didn't and still don't use anything to soak up the blood. In others they used moss and other natural fibres inside the vagina or wrapped around outside. In Ghana women wrap themselves in red rags—much more sensible than white.

For centuries most European women used cloths; we still use the old words like towel and napkin, and the American expression "got the rags on". Some older women can remember using these cloth towels which had to be constantly washed and re-used: "My diapers were made of harsh towelling, and I used to creep into the laundry and crouch over a bucket of foul clouts, hoping that my brother would not catch me at my revolting labours" (Germaine Greer again). Until quite recently women were expected to spend most of their period indoors. These towels are used today in several Third World countries, notably in China where women have to take time off work to visit wash stations and change cloths; this is sometimes given as a reason why Chinese women are still awarded fewer work points than men. Back home in Britain, though we've got disposable towels and tampons, periods are still supposed to make us a terrible job liability.

The first disposable sanitary towel was marketed in 1880 by Southalls but not widely used until much later. At the turn of the century journeys still meant special equipment, like the belt in the picture, because the usual napkins were so hard to change. Soluble towels came in the 1920s, they were a spin-off from the soluble bandages developed in World War I. Tampax were first marketed in the late 30s. This new technology did

mean a lot more mobility for women—and that's certainly a message the makers of sanitary protection are happy to re-iterate. This is, in fact, "the only promotional style of advertising to women which shows them in athletic, active and energetic roles instead of indulging the typical media woman's bovine leer. One feminist remarked recently that in advertisements for Tampax, you get the only example of women functioning as normal active people at the time, the only time, in the month when they feel least like it. However you look at it, it is strange that at the only time of the month when women have the ultimate reinforcement of their femininity, the marketers are falling over themselves to show women how to indulge freely and fearlessly in the most 'masculine' of pursuits". (Rosemary Scott, *The Female Consumer*)

That's not the only contradiction. We're supposed to buy freedom by acting as a captive market. Two manufacturers—Southalls and Tampax—sell 80% of the sanitary protection in this country. Commercial monopolies usually mean high prices. Southalls and Tampax made nearly £3 million in 1975, the Price Commission found. Towel prices rose by up to 70% between 1972 and 1975, partly because of a rise in the price of cotton. But tampon prices went up at the same time, though tampons don't use nearly as much cotton in manufacture.



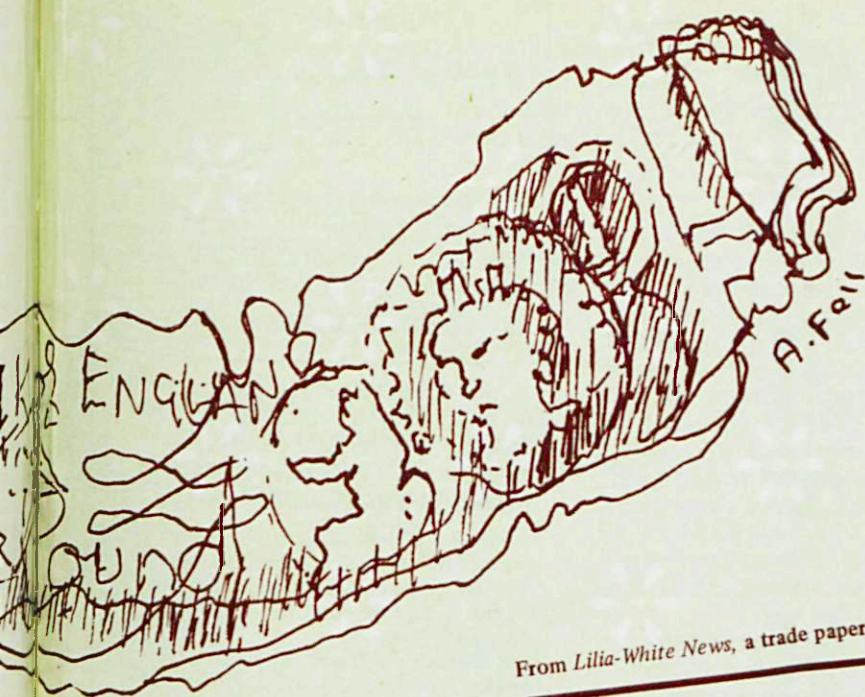
by Amanda Sebestyen

THE
TRADE "HYGENA" MARK
MENSTRUAL PROTECTOR
OR
TEMPORARY URINAL.
For Ladies' Use.



THIS appliance is a simple and perfect protection for the clothing during the menstrual periods and is far more efficient and hygienic than the ordinary sanitary towel. It is made of the finest quality rubber which, being very soft and smooth, entirely does away with the unpleasant chafing associated with the ordinary sanitary towel. Any absorbent material can be placed in the receptacle, and if necessary this can be changed without removing the protector. This is a great advantage when travelling.

A. LAMBERT & Co., 16, Dalston Lane, London, E.8.



A high proportion of listeners who follow the "Wogan's Winner" spot are women – and of course we believe that many of the listeners are also Dr. White's users."

"Terry Wogan's charm and appeal" Tom Jameson continued, "We feel that Terry Wogan's charm and appeal to women listeners cannot be disputed and that our competition – Win with Wogan and Dr. White's will prove to be a winning combination in 1977."

From Lilia-White News, a trade paper given out to chemists.

Entry Form

Complete the last line of the following limerick:—

Our leading towel brand set its sights
On its brand share reaching new heights
So here's my slogan
For that gent Terry Wogan

(BLOCK LETTERS)



Why? Well, Southalls tampon prices have to be linked to towel prices because the same company makes both . . . The Commission advised an immediate reduction in recommended retail prices—but found two years later that most small chemists' shops had taken to charging over the recommended price instead. Competing supermarkets, on the other hand, will often cut the price of tampons sharply, but even here, the Commission pointed out, "our samples did not throw up any loss-leaders * in sanitary protection. Even the cut-prices yield a reasonable gross margin" ie profit. After all, if tuna gets too expensive customers refuse to buy. But if tampons are expensive women don't really have much choice.

The point about the manufacturers' "new, improved" methods, of course, is that they often do more for sales figures than they do for our health: deodorised towels can cause allergic reactions, tampons are implicated in cervical erosion. And because the market for sanitary protection is more or less constant, the companies can only expand by trying to create new needs like minipads for between periods, and the by now notorious vaginal deodorants. The youngest age group, still hopefully "brand-disloyal", is of course the most sought after, and firms spend hugely on free samples, information leaflets and talks at schools. The latest youth product is Lillets Mini tampon for teenagers.

The tampon market is, in fact, an area of fierce if limited competition between the two biggest companies—limited because with only one competitor neither can engage in a proper price war. But fierce, because the number of women using tampons is slowly rising (only by 1% a year—apparently those old stories about tampons ruining you for marriage still have a hold). Tampon users tend to be younger than towel users. Lillets Mini are the latest of Southalls' attempts to overtake Tampax, who still have some powerful advantages: they were the innovators and their brand name's become completely identified with the product (like Biro or Hoover), and as an American company they have access to more capital for investing in sophisticated machinery and saving on labour costs. Southalls, though, invested massively in West German machinery to produce Lillets, and they're obviously determined to get their money back. One cut-throat advertising battle has already ended in a draw: "Lillets are pushing their widthways expansion as opposed to the lengthways expansion of Tampax, a contract which brought the companies to commercial blows in early 1974 when both started sneering at each other's claims and putting out knocking copy to prove it." (*Female Consumer*). Eventually one slapped an injunction on the other's advertisement.

There's another, more secret battle

taking place, and it's the period itself that's up for grabs between the sanitary protection firms and the drug companies that market the Pill. The doctors for "Dampax and Dr Blacks" say that women have always menstruated and can't possibly stop now—besides, every one of us will spend £350 in a lifetime on sanitary protection. The drug companies' doctors say that periods have no function except to keep women fertile—so those of us already taking the Pill could conveniently swallow seven more tablets a month and rid ourselves of "the Curse" for ever. But we still don't have enough information about menstruation to make a real choice for ourselves. And as usual, these transactions are taking place behind the backs of women.

But there are stirrings within the captive market. In 1975 the Free Sanitary Protection Campaign made a start at confronting the manufacturers directly (*Spare Rib* 43). It's a pity the campaign didn't last because it's an issue that affects all of us. Women in the street were really enthusiastic about Free Sanitary Protection; one woman on SS had three daughters, who all had their periods at the same time. The expense in that week just about wiped out their Giro payment.

* Loss-leader—product that a supermarket is prepared to make a loss on, for the sake of undercutting the opposition.

SPONGES

Women are now trying out ways of bypassing the companies' monopoly and going back to self-help methods. Bristol Free Sanitary Protection Group 'manufactured' their own tampons at a street theatre and gave them to the audience. But it's even cheaper to use something that doesn't have to be thrown away. Some women have been using their diaphragms to collect the blood—the diaphragm holds a lot more than a towel or tampon. When you think it's full, you remove it, wash it out and re-insert.

Some women in health groups are using menstrual extraction with the Karman Cannula to get their period over in ten minutes instead of five days. Some people say it hurts, though.



Now there's another idea. Small sponges were once used for contraception.

Between the Wars chemists sold sponge tampons called "moisettes", but they were forgotten with the arrival of disposables. Recently, though, women in the States have started using natural sponges again in place of commercial tampons. The sponges are softer, don't irritate the vagina and can be used again and again. Sheffield women's liberation group have been trying out the idea: "We find that it is more efficient, feels more natural, more comfortable and is certainly much CHEAPER".

A piece of natural sponge this size absorbs about as much as one regular tampon or towel. Sponges with small holes absorb more. To use the sponge, tie a piece of strong string or dental floss around it or through one end. Dampen it thoroughly, squeeze it out and insert. Whenever necessary, pull the string to remove it, wash with warm water and soap, squeeze out and use again. You can take a clean spare sponge with you in a bag if you can't face washing one out in a public place. But one sponge will last you for several periods. As far as we

Hygienic Rubber Safety Sponges



This is the latest absorbent safety sponge. We would wish specially to call attention to this sponge, with its advantages over other sponges, as it is a **certain preventive** and to users of other sponges, recommends itself, they knowing the disadvantages which occur when using the old kind. We are confident that anyone giving a trial to this rubber sponge will never use any other, as it is always soft and "ready for use," it is **easily cleaned**, will not crumble, but is always exactly the same as when new. Although this sponge costs a trifle more than an ordinary sponge it is more **economical** as it is practically **everlasting** and especially medicated for this purpose.

know it doesn't need sterilising—towels and tampons aren't sterile either. Just wash and keep till next month. The sponge can also be used to insert yoghurt for a thrush cure. □

Information about sponges from Boston Women's Health Books Collective and Sheffield Women's Liberation group. You can buy natural sponges from chemists and health stores.

Price Commission Report No 9, Prices of Sanitary Towels and Tampons, 1975 HMSO. Supplementary Report No 29, 1977.

The Female Consumer by Rosemary Scott, 1976, has a chapter on the sanitary protection market.

This article's mainly about the technology of menstruation. Not many writers have dealt with menstruation itself. The best discussions we know are in *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing, *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer, and *The Main Enemy* by Christine Delphy (a pamphlet reviewed in Short List)

The TASS Guide to What They Say. Number One.



This is the employer with the Low Paying Record

"You might think you're doing broadly the same work as him. I don't!"

"Women doing broadly the same work as men should be paid the same." So says the Equal Pay Act. But saying is one thing, paying is another. Employers have had years to regrade, reclassify and reorganise jobs to avoid this. And if your boss says no, where does that leave you?

You could start a legal battle.

Difficult, uncertain and possibly expensive for a woman alone.

Or you can join TASS.

We are the union for all staff in engineering. Our women's membership is growing faster than any other staff union.

Our policy is simple.

Men's Pay for Women. And we don't just say that, we make it work.

We have a spectacular record in equal pay negotiation.

If you want the benefit of our strength and expertise contact Judith Hunt, our National Women's Organiser. Better still, have a word with your local TASS representative.

TASS

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section
Head Office
Orison Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1QH
Telephone 01 948 2271

The nets

Tonight you have hung my room with nets.
They were there when I returned.
Nets, I saw, and laughed because I knew
you were nearby, and coming soon.

I am a liberated woman, and you
hang nets in my room.

Am I a mermaid, or a bird to be held?
In the dark of the early morning they fall,
the gentlest of capturings,
like a veil.

The dawn is a red theatre for birds.
We sit in a red bus, travelling west.
You missed your train. There will be other trains.
I am leaning on your shoulder
and dream.

POETRY

He said: Mostly I feel like a tractor.

I am a tractor
useful and physically strong,
but do not tax me.
I will not sing for you
or do a dance
except in the way tractors do.

I will keep famine from your hearth
and hum; turning the earth.
Incidentally, I feed birds with worms.
All kindness from me
is incidental.

You see these hands—
My mother came from Ireland.
They know what's what there, eh?
What's that you say?
I have no time for growing things.
I clear the area—see—
then hammer the seed home.

by *Natasha Morgan.*

ACADEMY PRESS

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NEWSHORTS

Refuge Squeeze: What's in a name?

Which of these organisations have you read about in the national press recently: Bradford Women's Aid, Chiswick Women's Aid, Guildford Women's Aid or Hastings Women's Aid? No prizes for guessing correctly; as usual, Chiswick Women's Aid hit national headlines in their dis-

pute with the local council about overcrowding. Erin Pizze, Chiswick's organiser, has made it clear that she is prepared to go to prison rather than close her doors to women seeking refuge. In the week of her court appearance, she was seen on television, on the front page of papers and even ap-

peared as guest at the 'Woman of the Year' luncheon.

While Chiswick picks up national sympathy, support and presumably cash with which to fight their campaign in the courts, what is happening to other smaller refuges fighting essentially the same battles but without the national exposure? Sadly, the story is predictable. Three refuges have recently gone to the wall because of local authority harassment and lack of public support. Without access to funds, or experience at putting a public case, these women

were unceremoniously evicted. They were not fighting for the right to overcrowd their premises, but for the right to exist.

Bradford's battle has been going on for years. In spite of being awarded an Urban Aid grant, the council refused to give them premises. They took on a private building on a short term basis but then council inspectors insisted that they carry out extensive repairs, withholding part of their grant until they did so. The women felt these conditions were absurd as such repairs would take longer than their anticipated occupation of the house. So they were simply abandoned while the house rotted around them. At the end of September, they were forced to abandon the building but the council have still refused to provide them with alternative accommodation so they have lost their grant, their worker is redundant and the battered women of Bradford have nowhere to go.

In Guildford and Hastings, councils again refused to accept the need for refuges and in both towns the Women's Aid groups occupied council-owned property. The occupations were in themselves evidence of need as women flocked to them for refuge. Both groups have since been evicted. In Hastings, the Tory-dominated council stated that, "It is wrong for a person or group to benefit by illegal action" and that "battered women are being used as pawns in an operation by a group of people to seek to obtain a benefit, regardless of the existing reputable organisations in the area". Needless to say those "existing organisations" did not meet the needs of the five women and eleven children for whom the Hastings Women's Aid group had to find space either in private houses or refuges in other areas.

While we support Chiswick's battle against the council, we feel that just a fraction of the publicity they have attracted might have drawn the necessary support to save these, and other smaller refuges from extinction. □

Angela Phillips



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IPL)

Picket outside London's law courts on October 26. That day women in Leicester also protested at their County Court—three women had already been affected by the Appeal Court ruling that only married women are protected by the Domestic Violence Act. "No end of women who come to us are cohabiting" said a woman from Leicester refuge.

Evelyn Muller, a trainee solicitor, reports that: "On the day after that judgement we made an application to the local County Court to evict Ms L's violent cohabitee. Although Ms L had already applied for a flat for herself and her 17 month old baby, Mr T applied behind her back and the council gave him precedence. So she decided to risk a joint tenancy with him and see how things worked out. He assaulted her five times in six months. Yet all we could obtain for her was a useless order that he mustn't assault her—because of the previous decision, the judge couldn't interfere with Mr T's property rights by evicting him. As Ms L says, 'Why should I be the one to leave—he only got the flat because of me and the kid.'"

feminine forever?

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) keeps your skin smooth, relieves depression and anxiety, gets rid of the 'hot flushes' and keeps you feminine forever. This is how the publicity surrounding HRT for menopausal women goes. Now several studies indicate

things aren't all that smooth. Out of 200 women in a London study, 33% of those on high estrogen (used for HRT) developed endometrial hyperplasia, which is similar to precancer; and some American studies have linked the drug with a five-to-ten-fold increase in uterine cancer; another pilot trial for a study is now on the way in Manchester.

In fact the American Federal Food and Drug Administration

Rights of Women, 2 St Pauls Rd,
London N1 (01-359 6656)

National Women's Aid
Federation, 51 Chalcot Rd,
London NW1 (01-586 0104)

(FDA) is currently being challenged in three federal court suits for requiring manufacturers to distribute a non-technical pamphlet to women along with every estrogen prescription, warning them of the cancer risk (the FDA has pre-

viously warned women about the dangers of hormonal pregnancy tests). Guess who brought the actions... Yes, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and a bunch of right wing medical societies—capital and patriarchy shoulder to shoulder. Doctors want to safeguard their traditional prerogatives of practising medicine as they see fit, yet people have a right to be fully in-



Tesco pushes rape

Tesco's appear to be supporting rape and to believe it's something to boast about. They've been selling men's underpants with 'I'm your friendly neighbourhood rapist' written across the front. On October 8 women in Catford, South London, staged a picket outside their local branch with a petition calling for the withdrawal of the pants. Local press coverage condemned Tesco's irrespon-

sibility. Since then *Spare Rib* have been informed by Tesco's Head Office that the pants have been removed nationally from the market...

Meanwhile, the law courts continue to show the side they're on. A sailor, Maurice Markham, was jailed for six months for attempted rape. The judge said "It would be a pity if this country loses your

services" and recommended that after his sentence he should be reinstated in the Royal Navy. Following from the Holdsworth case (see *SR* 61), it seems that the learned judges believe that members of HM forces have a license to rape HM female subjects. Perhaps it was the Ministry of Defence that put the order in for Tesco's new line in underwear. □

Rape Alert

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape has started a monthly Rape Alert, a list giving information about rapists—description and mode and area of operation. The list, compiled from cases called in to the PAAR Hotline, is distributed to the media, women's groups and community organisations to warn women of dangerous areas and to raise consciousness about rape.

In another American town, Dallas, women compiled and distributed 25,000 copies of a newspaper listing more than 2,000 local men who had been on rape charges and 60 men wanted for rape. "By publicising the names and confronting rapists publicly and privately whenever possible, we hope to make it more difficult for rapists to operate within a system of anonymity."

* A new notice by Faringdon Lake near Lechlade bans women anglers—"No dogs or women allowed"...

* A schoolgirl was expelled from a Torquay convent for reading the *Sensuous Woman*—mother superior said she had "killed her chances of having a happy marriage"...

* Dr Shirley Summerskill, Under Secretary of State, announced that women are not using the Sex Discrimination Act—only 360 cases have been heard so far. "If women do not fight for their legal rights they have only themselves to blame," she said. "They should seize the opportunity presented by this legislation." Dr Summerskill should come out from under and see what legislation means to most people. There's no legal aid, trade unions won't always help and in any case discrimination is extremely hard to prove...

* 13 chorus girls from 'Las Vegas Follies' won equal pay...



* 30 strippers at Nottingham's Churchill Club went on strike for more pay...

* "It is well known that by nature women are inclined to be rather personal. They attach themselves to persons and are inclined to follow them. To men love is a thing apart. It is woman's whole existence"—Judge Ewart James summing up the case of the 'Casanova Corporal', charged with conning women into bed by pretending he was planning to get divorced and marry them...

* American priest Alison Palmer celebrated communion in Manchester and Newcastle, the first woman to do so in the Church of England, and against official orders

* Ann Williams, the first woman to take part in the horse classes of the British national ploughing championships in Surrey, came ninth out of 21 in the long turn furrow section...

* Dr Konstantin von Puttkamer and his colleagues at the German Research Association have developed a treatment for girls between eleven and thirteen who show signs of growing to six foot or more. Their aim apparently is to save women from the resulting "psychological, social and practical problems", but we rather think they are trying to keep us Brunhildes down...

The Law of the Father

The National Council for One Parent Families has just brought out a paper entitled 'Abolishing Illegitimacy'. It suggests, rightly, that all children should have the same legal rights regardless of whether their biological parents are married or not; but one of the rights they believe children should have is to have a father, registered on the birth certificate and with equal control of the child with the mother, even against the mother's wishes. The paper quickly moves from talking about children's rights to arguing for fathers' rights.

In practice the suggested legal changes would make it

easy for any man to claim rights over your child just by saying he is the biological father—and the burden of proof would be on you to argue that he wasn't. And once registered as the father he could apply for custody: if you are an undesirable mother—feminist or lesbian—he would probably get it. *



Some comments from Sandra McNeill:

The patriarchal system is that of the family, and developed from man's need to control his children through the control of individual women. The father is paid one wage out of which to maintain his dependents, women and children. In exchange he gets his rights over them embodied in the State. Breaches women have made in this system include going out to work, leaving husbands and—most of all—having our children without marriage. The State has fought this by re-

fusing to provide enough nurseries, by paying men more 'as they have to provide for their families' and by holding any man we choose to live with responsible for us via the SS—by refusing, in other words, free 24-hour childcare and legal and financial independence. Legally enforced paternity is a yet more direct attempt to shore up the system.

This proposal comes at the same time as attacks on our right to have abortions. Imagine what a combination of the two changes would mean—no choice as to whether to have a child or not, no choice as to who takes control over our children. In our fight back let's demand that the State abolishes illegitimacy by giving all women the right to choose whether or not the father's name is registered. We want the rights. We'll take the responsibilities.

We can use existing campaign structures—NAC, Action for Lesbian Parents, Legal and Financial Independence etc—to expose and fight what is going on. Under the guise of the interests of children once more the interests of men and the State are being promoted against the interests of women. □

* The proposals would not help women who want the fathers to take responsibility—fathers can already be registered if the mother wishes, although the burden of proof again is on the woman to prove it if the man denies it.

formed and make their own decisions. Dr H J Barnum Jr who testified against FDA, clearly sees menopausal women as nervous wrecks, incapable of decision anyway: "It is hard to imagine a class of patients more susceptible to adverse psychological reactions (from the pamphlet) than the menopausal female..."

The National Women's Health Network and three consumers' defence groups have joined the FDA in this fight. □

NEWSHORTS

Sneaking round the Act

Such expectations of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination legislation that women might still have, took yet another knock in the September 22 issue of the *New Law Journal*. In a long and detailed article one Mr Alec Samuels first traces the "pattern of decisions" that is emerging from the Employment Appeal Tribunal—this is quite informative—and then goes gaily on to give elaborate advice on how to circumvent the laws. "Suppose the employer prefers to employ men, to promote men, to pay his men more than his women . . . perhaps for very good business reasons. What can he do within the law?"

Well, if the employer was having any difficulties (and most employers have not found it a great strain to get round either Act), Mr Samuels comes up with a few suggestions. Such as: "The advertisement seeking candidates should stipulate qualifications and experience much more likely to be found in men than women." Technically, the 'indirect discrimination' clause should cover such practices, but it is made impotent by allowing for 'justifiability'. That is—the employer can show that a requirement, though discriminatory in effect, is justifiable in terms of the job. With plenty of money to pay cunning lawyers, this is easy.

Mr Samuels goes on: "In the selection and appointment procedures he should include a

Giving Up All

A 21-year-old student teacher, who had postponed his training to stay at home and look after his baby lost his custody case on October 11. The evidence at a Pontypool Magistrates Court showed that he had done a good job of dealing with the child's needs without any assistance. But the President of the Family Division had other criteria in mind when he said "There is, I think, in the minds of most people something not very satisfactory in the idea of a young man giving up all to look after a baby when there is a mother willing and able to do so." The president thinks looking after children is a trivial occupation, best suited to women. Typical that a man so flippant about parenthood should be sitting on the Family Division. □

woman on the panel, though always in a minority, for appearances . . . The job title or description should be so drafted as by its nature to deter the woman or make it difficult for her . . ." Not surprisingly, Mr Samuels considers that "the ethics of sex discrimination are a personal matter. So long as he operates within the law the employer is entitled to run his business as he thinks best, providing work for his employees, goods and services for the market, profits for his shareholders and tax for the country." With attitudes like these given credence in the legal profession, it's no wonder that the number of successful SDA and EPA cases is so low.

Rights of Women (ROW) phoned the editor of *New Law Journal*—a woman—to complain about the article. We were briskly told it is in 'the public interest' to write about loopholes in any legislation. She did not seem to appreciate the difference between exposing and criticising loopholes perhaps even urging relevant amendments (as the National Council for Civil Liberties is doing)—and merely illustrating in triumphal tones how easy it is to evade potentially progressive laws. □

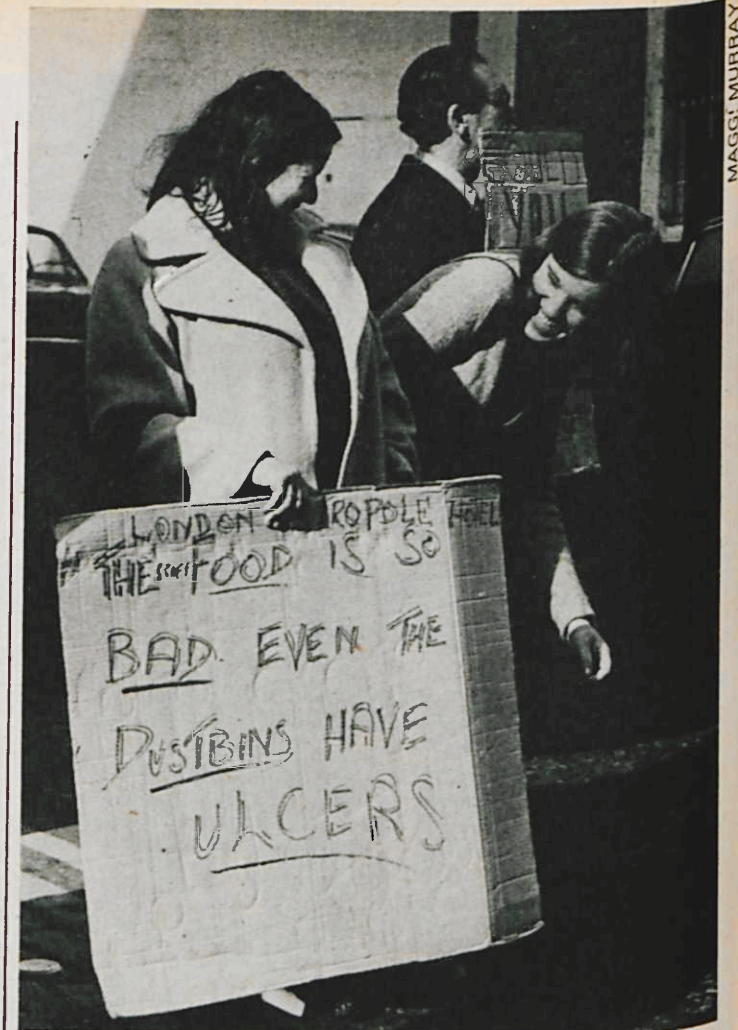
Jenny Earle, ROW Collective

A new NCCL report—Amending the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act by Jean Coussins—is available for 50p (incl. postage) from NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9DE.

The richness of our lives

For three weeks in November and December London's Drill Hall will be housing a huge Women's Festival "to show off the richness of our lives". It will feature plays, concerts, film and dance with exhibitions, discussions and workshops. On Fridays and Saturdays there'll be late night music, and Sundays are set aside for children's workshops, classical music and cream teas.

It was the desire to produce *Voices*, a new play by American poet and playwright Susan Griffin, which led to Women's Festival 77. Having unsuccessfully approached theatres throughout London, Kate Crutchley and Nancy Diuguid finally found a venue at the Action Space Drill Hall. A community project centre, Action Space asks all groups performing there to involve people by filling the entire building with workshops, discussions or whatever. To Kate and Nancy the obvious arena for *Voices*



In mid-October, workers at the London Metropole Hotel in Edgware Road went on unofficial strike for better pay and conditions. About half the 300 odd staff are women, many from Spain and Morocco. Most of them work as chambermaids.

One of the women's main complaints was about the number of rooms they service each day. They work a 40-hour week, often with unsocial hours. Each day they clean and prepare 16 rooms. Comparable hotels like the Hilton and Savoy allot 10 or 12 to each maid. Room preparation includes bed-making, hoovering, and cleaning the lavatories. Corridors and storage rooms also require regular care. The maids say that cleaning materials are often inadequate, guest towels sometimes serve as dusters and the hoovers have not been serviced since they were bought. For this work the chambermaids get £34.40. The company then deducts £11 for bed and board at their hostel where many share three to a room.

The union involved, the GMWU, is not backing the strike which came after months of negotiations.

"We had to do something," said one woman on her fifth day picketing the hotel. "You can't manage in Central London on £19 a week even if you do live in their lousy hostel."

Incidentally, for anyone short of a bed, turning up to stay at the four-year-old Metropole will cost £35 per night—without breakfast. But be warned by how the chambermaids rate this four-star block: "I wouldn't give it half a moon. The rooms are like crowded boxes with no storage space. You can keep it." □

Maggi Murray

should be an entire festival of women's work. Helped by ten other organisers, they contacted possible participants, organising the festival round themes.

Because of the way the Drill Hall is funded, the festival is open to a mixed audience, though there will be several workshops open to women only—those on sexuality and lesbianism in particular.

The conditions under which the festival has been organised and artists have agreed to perform are typically unsatisfactory: to date, small amounts of

money have been donated to cover office costs and publicity, but fees for performers will come largely from box office. So the festival is charging admission for performances and concerts (prices low, but not yet fixed).

The festival starts on November 29 at 3pm with street theatre and a procession along Tottenham Court Road to the Drill Hall, where there'll be music, refreshments and previews of the shows. Come and join us! □

Kate Phelps

Details of the programme on page 2

Choosing to fit in ... or not fit in

The main issue that came out of the first Women and Mental Health Conference in London on October 22-23 was whether or not there can be such a thing as feminist therapy.

The argument is basically between those who believe that when we can't cope we should take time to go through our problems with people who know what they are doing—that therapy makes us better able to go out and be political—and those who believe that personal one-to-one therapy is

counter-revolutionary because it defuses women's real anger at society, because it perpetuates the professional/client relationship, and because we cannot split political action from personal change—one cannot sort out one's head separately from working to change society, because *the personal is political*.

All agreed that women are freaking out inside and outside the Women's Liberation Movement because women in our society live under a great deal of stress: that current psychiatric

practice is appalling; and that we must do something to enable women to go on fighting for change. A redefinition of mental health was formulated—mental health as self-determination, being able to choose to fit in or not fit in, to change or not.

There was much discussion on practical things that should come out of the conference. Some of the suggestions were—the setting up of crisis centres where women can go when they can't cope, to enable them to stay out of mental hospitals; the establishment of a support network, where women can ring someone for support on a 'non-reciprocal' basis—another conference soon, possibly in Leeds; and various groups to start on co-counselling, self-help, and to talk about where to go from here. □ Ruth Wallsgrove

A Maureen Colquhoun Action Committee has been formed to try and get her reinstated as Labour Party candidate for Northampton North and to publicise the sex discrimination around her dismissal. Apart from being a feminist, Maureen Colquhoun 'happens' to be a lesbian and 'happens' not to hide the fact—something that the fossils on the committee could not forgive her for. The Action Committee wants people to help their campaign by writing to her constituency LP, LP National Executive etc

Contact MCAC, 5 Grove Dwellings, Adelina Grove, London E1 (01 450 3806).



5000 people marched through Birmingham on the national abortion demonstration, the biggest demo seen there in years. A pity neither national press nor local or national TV saw fit even to mention it.



Adèle Faccio from Italy speaks at the rally.

SECRET DEAL?

In September, the Labour Party conference voted by far more than a two-thirds majority in favour of abortion on demand and against restrictive legislation. This vote makes the resolution party policy which could find its way onto the party election manifesto. Yet, even while that vote was taking place, the Labour Party big-wigs were making plans for a secret meeting to bring together pro-choice and anti-abortion MPs with a view to formulating some kind of compromise abortion amendment which would be given extra time to get through Parliament.

The list of MPs invited to the meeting on October 25 did

not at first include a single woman. Health Minister Roland Moyle must have realised just in time that this could reflect badly on any deal he cooked up, so Joan Lester and Oonagh McDonald were asked along too. By chance the National Abortion Campaign discovered where and when the meeting was being held and 40 members picketed the doors to show just what they thought of such dealing.

The situation is serious. No reports have been given out and all committee members have promised to keep quiet about the discussion. We do know however that further meetings are planned. Information circulating indicates that

probable areas for amendment will be: the time limit for legal abortion; regulations regarding the abortion charities and the conscience clause for medical personnel.

No doubt a number of Labour MPs will stand firmly behind the vote of conference, but the Government has clearly been intimidated by the vociferous campaigning against the Act and with unbelievable naivety hope that if they concede on some issues the problem will go away. Doubtless anti-abortionists will attempt to destroy the 1967 Act by whatever route they can. If it means piecemeal nibbling away of the law over a period of years, they will do just that.

At the end of October, a 14 year old girl was prosecuted for trying to abort herself with

six laxative tablets. In this country, no woman in living memory has been charged with such a 'crime'. The legislation exists as a clause in the 'Offences against the Person Act' 1861; but it has never been used. The case occurred in Leamington Spa, home of the anti-abortion organisation 'Life'.

It now seems almost certain that a new private members bill will be introduced into Parliament next year. If that bill is backed by the Labour government, some people may be fooled into thinking that it is an insignificant measure. In that case it may be more difficult to rally support against it, making the work of the pro-choice movement harder in the coming year... so much for Labour Party resolutions! □

Angela Phillips



Gladys Fox 1949

Gladys



"I used to go to the attic to read"

Some time ago Gladys Fox sent her life story to Spare Rib. She wanted to write for us partly to show how her life was wrecked by the laws governing admission to mental hospitals. Her experience indicts the treatment of patients both before and after the 1959 Mental Health Act, which is now being reviewed; in August this year social workers revealed how the Act is being abused, and new criticisms are still coming to light.

But that's not the whole of Gladys' story, because, as she says, she's never lost her spirit. Today she's campaigning for pensioners' rights in Rotherhithe, where she lives. And her writing provides us with a picture of forty years' political activism.

I was born in a house in Page's Walk, Bermondsey. The first world war was on, and I remember one of the air raids. My mother carried me opposite to the flats there. They were known by the name of Guinness Buildings. There were four families to one toilet and that's where we found our shelter—in the toilets—I remember this because they seemed so tall next to me. Everybody was frightened at the time. I know I was.

My parents lived in the house in Bermondsey for 60 years. My favourite aunt always told my cousins to call my mother by the name of Polly, putting the 'ly' on it, so she was always Polly. As I shall call her . . .

My father was always master to everyone who knew him, and from now on I'll call him 'Master'. As a child I idolised him. He was known as a live wire in Bermondsey, and used to hold debates in the Town Hall, until I was about five. It was Atheism versus Religion the Master used to debate, between himself and the local vicar. Polly and I used to dress up and go there, I in a straw hat with ribbons on it and a frilled dress. I would stand up and see him, over a sea of faces. I couldn't hear what he was saying but I know I loved him till I ached.

I never knew Master to leave home, all the years he was there. Long walks he would go, but never did he have a holiday or anything. He'd never been to school. But just after he was married, on one of his numerous walks from our house he came on a group of men on a platform, saying they wanted to educate the workers. The Master thought that was a good idea. They educat-

ed him alright. They taught him Marx, Lenin and Engels. And he started to write in the local press after that.

We lived near a railway, the horses and carts used to rumble by on the cobbled roads. The horses used to kick in the stables of the railway, and kick the neighbours' ornaments off the shelf. The Master used to sit on one side of the fireguard, with a fender underneath that had the words 'Home Sweet Home' on it. And on the other side sat Polly and in her deep fruity voice she'd sing hymns of the Harvest Festival, or Easter ones. She had a marvellous voice, and should have sung at concerts. None of the Master's lectures appeared to cure her religiousness.

When I was very young I used to sit on the Master's knee, and push him in the tummy and say I had put a record on. And he would sing. The verses would go like this:

*Baby grows older but baby grows weak,
Those pretty roses they fade from her cheek,
No longer she cries for her dear Mum and*

*Dad,
No longer she cries for the toys that she had.*

Then Polly used to sing, "Hush, Hush, here comes the boggy man—Underneath the blankets or he'll have you if he can." I don't think my brothers were disturbed by the singing, like I was. They were eight years older than me. Frank, the eldest, used to paint and do marvellous drawings. One was a picture of two chubby children going up a pathway and into the Sun of Socialism. The Master used to teach Frank boxing, and they would train in the kitchen—the varnish wallpaper always used to fall off. Then I

would put the gloves on, and they would play with me.

Both my brothers used to help in my parents' shop. From the front room they sold boots and shoes, skirts and overalls, and many other things. So we were known in Bermondsey . . . I remember I used to play with the boy next door, digging mud pies, and he used to say to me in his playful way—"Piece Work Bill". And I never knew what that meant, I only knew one had to work harder so I did. But it was always in their house we played, never in ours. Mostly my parents were too busy in the shop.

It used to be ten o'clock before it was closed, and I did not go to bed until one o'clock in the morning so was very tired for school.

The customers used to call once a week after they had their goods, they paid for them at sixpence a week. When he couldn't get his money the Master used to take them to court. But gradually the debts piled up on both sides and the shop closed. It was then I found the Master crying and my world fell down. He soon cheered up and he never did it again, but he was never really happy—can you call a man who was a bit of a bully happy?

After the shop was closed the Master invented things. In the back of our home was an attic, there was a bench, a drill set and a vice—and lots of filing went on. There was a winter and summer fireguard the Master invented, that went up like a guard in the winter, and down for the summer.

Then this thing appeared, a frame with big pram wheels on it. The Master had made a scooter. It was given to me to try out, and life was fun. The bike business began. The chickens and the garden had to go. A shed was built, and a forge was put in

Fox



1926—Cowboys and Indians in South London

the corner. There were lots of scooters and bikes with numbers on them. They were let out to children in the flats—one penny an hour for a scooter, or two pennies for a bike. They would all come to the passage, and there the Master and Polly would stand with a big book in their hands while the children called out the number they wanted. They all had their favourite number and sometimes would wait an hour for it. One day Polly came in looking very white, out of breath. She had caught a child on a bike from under the wheel of a cart. A week later the scooter and bike business was stopped. The Master started work at the Elephant and Castle, making fire engines.

I went to school and loved it. I started to read a lot—mostly comics. I used to read Rainbow, Tiger Tim, Playbox and Bubbles. But I took to reading books as I got older, Charles Dickens and Jack London. I used to go to the attic to read as Polly did not take to it. My education was mostly her business—the Master had his own books to read. I was doing well at school, but the only thing I was having a job with was my spelling. The teacher sent a note to the Master to help me, but he only sent a letter back to say—If I was to spell, I would. And that was that. The teacher was very disappointed, for I was a great favourite with her and was a monitor.

On Sunday we would be dressed smart, and my brothers would take me to Socialist Sunday School. They would run and play football on the way and frighten me greatly. I was afraid of getting lost.

At the Sunday School we'd sing:

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful
Would be enjoyed by all*

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
All will be out of power,
Soon will be out of date.*

I always got a prize at school for Scripture, it did not matter if that was spelt right. I think the other subjects should be the same. I was good at sports and won the Federation for South-East London high jump competition. I was training hard when Polly decided to put me in corsets. I was all bones and laces and couldn't breathe, let alone jump.

Growing Up

As I got older it seemed anything I liked doing was stopped. In a house opposite lived a woman with three boys, the youngest was still a baby. His name was Ronnie and I looked after him, even buying him his first football and boots. I loved him dearly but the Master stopped it when I got older because he said it would give the wrong impression.

In 1926 there was the General Strike. All day something was happening. I was looking from a top window and I've never seen so many horses, with the police on them. I thought it was like cowboys and indians, but my brothers booed them and that taught me. The man next door was brought down by the police, all blood over his mouth. That night the street lighting was cut, it was pitch black outside and my brother was out in it all. The streets were being cleared by the police, and the Master was rowing with them because of my brother. Suddenly my brother came in, and all was well that ended well.

I didn't want to leave school when I was 14. I wanted to do office work but Polly

and the Master insisted I did court dress-making like my cousin. My pay was 6s, and the fare was 3/6d. It was over the West End Machinkas at 36 Dover Street opposite the Ritz. It was a crowded workshop. No air. Mice running over one's feet. Chairs going through the floor. Stockroom at the bottom of the house, and the workshops at the top. The apprentices had a lot to do running up and down all day, getting the various cottons and things. And there we made clothes for Mrs Churchill, Duff Cooper, Chamberlain and Bernard Shaw. (I'll never go to the races, even now—I've had enough of Ascot with my fingers pricked on Sarah and Dianah Churchill's dresses).

I joined the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union and gave evidence at a court of the National Trade Union Inquiry investigating the number of young people in dead-end jobs. I insisted that though there were apprenticeships in court dressmaking, it was a 'blind alley' job. I was only repeating what was being said in my workshop but my statement was reported in the press. Luckily my name was not printed otherwise I would have been sacked; I was referred to instead as 'The Young Blonde'. Girls of my generation were expected to be seen and not heard so it was thought a great thing that us women spoke up and fought back.

Politics

In 1934 Gladys joined the Labour League of Youth, the young people's section of the Labour Party. Reading her father's socialist literature had made her politically aware, but he disliked the local labour party and believed in direct action rather than org-

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• YOUTH'S
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APRIL 1938.

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BEST
FRIEND
to page 5

Vol. 4. No. 34

FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE PEOPLE

JUNE 14, 1938

IF YOU DON'T WANT
BOMBS ON BRITAIN—
SEND ANTI-AIRCRAFT
GUNS TO SPAIN



"The Advance was the paper which was popular with me"

ised politics. Gladys remembers that he was arrested in Cable Street, attacking the fascist marches through the East End.

It was a shock to the Master when I came home and said I had joined the League. But I had experience of working in other organisations and knew I was accepted.

I became Literature Secretary, and sold all sorts of papers. There was *The Youth Militant* which was Trotskyist, *The Advance* of the Labour Party and *The Challenge* which was a Young Communist League paper with articles on women's equality. And I sold the *Daily Worker* which we were now reading at home.

Ted Willis, who is now a lord, was editor of the *Advance* and that was the paper which was popular with me. As I was a good seller I used to go to his editorial meetings and found them very interesting. I was always silent though, because the Master told me once that I had asked a stupid question and I never spoke again.

The election of 1935 was very stimulating. With a handful of workers we formed a Young Communist League, but I never left my Labour League of Youth. I used to go there on Wednesday and to the YCL on Friday, there wasn't much difference between them in Bermondsey. Their aims were the same:

*A five day week,
Eight hours a day,
Trade union rates
and holidays with pay.*

They were united against unemployment and passed the same resolutions; on women's equality, anti-fascist and anti-war resolutions. But the older people in the Labour Party ignored the Youth League's anti-fascism, their attitude was: pay no attention and it will all go away. They are the same today with the National Front.

All this time things were very bad for me at home because Polly was on the Master's side regarding my politics. She thought girls shouldn't be active in politics and the arguments were terrible. They never left me alone, but I continued to be minute secretary of both organisations and sold their papers for years.

Marriage

Gladys met her husband in the Labour League of Youth. He joined three years after her. She says he was a good speaker and used to put across her ideas at meetings as her father had frightened her out of speaking in public.

Life was marvellous, I idolised him. He was a progressive in many ways: I remember when Labour League of Youth members came to our conferences telling the unemployed how to cook cheaply, he said, "You can't cook bread and cheese."

We got married and lived at New Cross, London. Even after my two children were born we still went to meetings together, Polly usually minded the children.

When war broke out, my husband was reserved because he worked in the Woolwich Arsenal. He was sent to Northampton and I followed. There my first baby was born. I went to work in a boot and shoe factory. I worked on the men's press and each week I went to the manager and said, "How am I doing?" He'd say, "Much better than the men," so I said, "Well, can I have the same wage as a man then?" I got a rise nearly every week until I got a man's wage. They wouldn't let me

in the Boot and Shoe Union but I knew that if you accepted a low rate you would be undermining the rate for the men who were at the Front.

When the war ended we moved back to London and lived in Brockley. At the time I felt married women should stay at home and not go out to meetings, but a friend came to see me and persuaded me to join the Co-op Guild. I took my son with me—my daughter was at school—we had lovely times together. But it was difficult because I was in the Communist Party and Rule 21 of the Guild stated that Communists could not take part in committee work. So I joined the National Assembly of Women whose members were mainly young women, many in the CP.

We did a lot of political work, especially for Ban The Bomb. We set up a card table in Deptford High Street and petitioned against the bomb. I collected so many signatures that in 1949 the National Assembly of Women asked me to go abroad and represent them on a delegation visiting Rumania. It was about the same time the Communist Party asked me to serve on their Women's National Advisory Committee at Bedford Street.

I didn't tell the Master I was going to Rumania, because by then he was violently anti-Communist and would have stopped me. Rows got more and more violent. He would not stop from coming to my home. Everything I said, he'd say, "Poor Girl, she don't know what she's saying." But I was lecturing on Rumania at Co-op Guilds and they always asked me back three or four times so I knew I was all right.

Divorce

The rowing got so bad that at Christmas I gave up lecturing. My husband was jealous of my political activity and was sulking all the time. The Master got at him about my National Assembly of Women, he used to say, "She should stay at home, do the housework, look after the kids." My husband listened to him, though the house was always polished. He went to the doctor and said I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown—he called it the "beam"—but I got a friend to go with me to the doctor and help me tell him there was nothing wrong with me.

Then I went to marriage guidance and they said my husband should see a psychologist. But there was a lot of gossip and I needed a rest. In the end I was so exhausted I went voluntarily into an asylum in Kent—which turned out to be a real concentration camp. The doctor there said I should file for a divorce as my husband was so cold towards me.

And in 1957 I got the divorce, on the grounds of mental cruelty. My husband did not come to defend himself, he had left home—the Master had him to stay at Page's Walk. I was given custody of the children and my husband was to have access to them twice a week. Dr Lieberman of the Kent home spoke for me in court. Had he remained in this country, my story might have been very different.

Then my husband started saying he wasn't being allowed to see the children, which wasn't true. A social worker kept coming to inspect me and the children. What they called a broken home was considered a terrible situation. It was thought that a single woman could not bring up children.

The Asylum

When Gladys' husband married again he applied for custody of the children but lost the case. She has seen the statement by her husband's solicitor, which placed great emphasis on her connections with the Communist Party.

Soon after, Gladys was committed to Bexley mental hospital. She doesn't know who committed her. It was before the 1959 Mental Health Act. There was nothing to compel the authorities to inform patients who had committed them. The application could be made by "a relative or public official supported by two medical recommendations" (Percy Report) and had to be submitted to a Justice of the Peace. But then, as now, there were emergency sections (20 and 21) which allowed people to be bundled into hospital bypassing the JP.

Naturally I should like to find out the truth about what happened to me, but my concern is for the people left behind, shut up in those prisons. A great deal of cruelty goes on. They inject you as a punishment. They are aggressive with their electrical stuff. I remember one girl standing up and saying, "I don't want electric treatment, I dream about it," but it didn't do her any good. I went back to see her and she was in an awful state.

The people stuck in there were refugees, orphans, single women and men and old age pensioners. While I was there I worked very hard. Scrubbing floors and passages—anything to get home to my children. There was a shortage of staff so I'd give old people their breakfast, do their bedsores and change sheets.

In the Bexley hospital I had ECT, and at St Olave's in Rotherhithe a course of injections which produced terrible side effects. I got sores all over my body and went up from nine stone to fifteen. I pleaded with them to stop giving me drugs. One nurse would insist on holding my face under the bath water. Last time I saw her, she had been made a Sister.

Cat and Mouse

The report prior to the 1959 Act noted that patients were released on leave, trial or absence but that the hospitals retained power to recall them at any time. "It is clear," they said, "that many patients were recalled to hospital for reasons which would not have led to a psychiatric hospital... if they had not already been under order. These reasons include physical illness and accidents such as a broken arm." Gladys was constantly recalled, even once because she had been run over. And the 1959 Act itself also allows patients to be recalled without complex discharge and re-admission procedures.

I used to say they had a "Cat and Mouse Act" on me. At least, they called it Cat and Mouse with the suffragettes. But I call it "Cat and Rat" because rats have sharp teeth and can fight back. Well, for three months at a time I would be put away and then let out again. Although I was in and out so many times, one occasion sticks out in my mind. There was a heavy rat tat on the door and I knew what that meant. Looking through the window I saw two tall men with thin lips at my front door. I was afraid and did not open the door. Then



Historical back Ribs

No 29 Memories of my mother-in-law—
girlhood in the First World War...

Olive Schreiner, South African feminist at the
turn of the century.

Women's involvement in labour movement on display at
Exhibition of Labour History

No 31 Lucy looks back on life through this century

No 34 Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman—Marie Bashkirtseff,
late 19th century artist

No 35 History of Household Appliances

No 36 Who was Annie Kenney?—the early life of the Oldham
'mill girl' suffragette

No 39 Women in National Museum of Labour History

No 41 Review: 'Fenwomen' book by Mary Chamberlain

No 42 Lawful Wedded Wife—Caroline Norton's campaign against
19th century marriage laws

No 44 General Maid—Minnie Cowley's experiences in domestic
service 1910-1923

No 46 Yorkshire Fisherwomen... Review: 'You're a Brick,
Angela!', book on girls fiction 1839-1975

No 47 Fashionable bondage—history of fashion 2...

Reviews: 'Silent Sisterhood', book about middle-class
Victorian wives, and 'Medieval Women' and 'Order of the
Rose' about women in medieval society.

No 49 Attraction of Opposites?—history of fashion 3...

Midwives past and present

No 50 Abortions in the 1950s

No 51 Why not slip into something more comfortable—history of
fashion 4

No 52 Paula Modersohn-Becker, woman artist in the 19th century

No 53 Review: 'Vinegar Tom' play by Monstrous Regiment about
witch hunts and women

No 54 Interview with Dora Russell

No 55 Acting for the Vote—agitprop theatre in 1910

No 56 Review: 'Eleanor Marx' serial on BBC

No 58 Reviews: 'Eleanor Marx; The Crowded Years 1884-1898',
and 'Amazon of Letters; the life and loves of Natalie Barney'

No 59 Women's Art International 1877-1977—Berlin Exhibition

No 60 Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Exhibition

No 62 Reviews: 'The Tamarisk Tree', autobiography of Dora

Russell, and 'Union Maids', film of women trade unionists in
USA in the 1930s

No 63 Reviews: 'Billie's Blues', book about Billie Holiday, and 'Life
As We Have Known It', book by Co-operative Working
Women

No 64 Abortion Remedies in Victorian and Edwardian England

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see review Spare Rib Issue 64

I heard breaking glass and they opened the
window and jumped in. They made a great
deal of signing a form together and both
dragged me to a waiting ambulance.

My children were growing up. They
belonged to the Woodcraft Folk—the
youth section of the Co-op movement—and
went to comprehensive schools. At my
daughter's school they held massive teacher/
parent meetings. I did a great deal of work
for them. I would be taken into hospital,
come out and represent the schools at con-
ferences. But in the end I went inside so
often that I lost my children to my ex-
husband for a year.

When my son was of age he packed up
and came home to me. My daughter had
already left her father. I'd brought them up
to be independent and they wanted their

independence. The Master died, I was in
the mental home at the time. He died say-
ing I was the best of the bunch.□

It's some years since Gladys was last in
mental hospital, and as she says her memory
of the details is hazy, but recent revelations
by social workers and doctors show how
casually people can still be sectioned.

Doctor Rena Proud, consultant psychiatrist
at Bexley Hospital where Gladys was con-
fined, discovered this example of a woman
who had been admitted under the emer-
gency section 29: "A doctor, who had not
even seen the woman, acted both as the
doctor making the medical recommenda-
tion and also as the applicant." (Com-
munity Care August 24 1977).

It's estimated that something like
5,000 people are wrongfully subjected to
compulsory admission every year in
England and Wales. MIND's recent report,
A Human Condition, brings together
criticisms of the Mental Health Act and
especially of the emergency section which
allows people to be committed by one
social worker and only one medical re-
commendation. MIND suggests that
patients should only be committed if
they've proved themselves to be dangerous,
and that each compulsory admission should
go before a Mental Health Tribunal within
five days. A White Paper reviewing the Act
is promised for next year. But judging by
the way previous acts have been manipu-
lated, forcible powers will be misused as
long as they exist.

Apology

The article in SR 64 on Abortion In Victorian And Edwardian England was by Patricia Knight. We're really sorry her name was omitted.

Letters continued

system, is a political irony. For a discussion of this issue, I commend a recent feature in the *New Internationalist* (Oct 77)—an interview with Joyce by Maggie Black.

Yours in sisterhood,
Jan Marsh, Research Officer IDAF,
London N3.

Ann Oosthuizen replies:

Defence and Aid sent the book to Spare Rib to review. My question in reviewing it was whether it would be of interest to Spare Rib readers and whether it had a feminist perspective. I think I was encouraging about the book because it was written by a very brave woman about her own life and had many intimate details of specific hardships suffered by women in Soweto. However it is quite dogmatically not feminist and I do not agree that Soweto is as isolated from the rest of South Africa in the way that Jan Marsh and Joyce Sikakane suggest. I have not lived in Johannesburg or in Soweto, but I have spent many days in the Black Sash Advice Office in Johannesburg and can say with conviction that the many people who come there have very definite links with family in the rural areas and that women are indeed suffering a more intense and sometimes different form of oppression from the men.

I do not agree that this aspect of women's oppression is adequately dealt with in For Their Triumphs And Their Tears. I did not, however, say in the review that the fight against sexism should have priority over the fight against racism, but that sexism should be recognised now as part of the total struggle. In this context I should like to refer to Article III of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) constitution which declares as one of its basic aims "To combat all reactionary tendencies of individualism, tribalism, racism, sexism and regionalism".

The biggest human folly

* Dear Spare Rib,
By the time I had finished reading Ms Slater's article "Why I decided to have a baby" (SR 63), there were tears of sadness in my eyes which quickly turned to tears of disgust and rage.

Given her past experience in communal living and child-rearing only a blind, or blinkered, spectator could have written... "From quite early on it seemed that the pregnancy was not compatible with multiple relationships" or, "We were all three stuck together. I couldn't leave her. I couldn't take her away from him..."

How could any 'thinking' person have overlooked the classic and most obvious factors of what is essentially a tripartite relationship?

If Ms Slater had spent less time trying to impress her political and feminist friends and desiring to be seen conforming to peer group pressures then her now wasted energy could have been used more constructively in gaining the self-knowledge that can lead to finding solutions for such questions as why do I want a baby? and why are people hostile to my desire?

Ms Slater makes it clear that she cannot articulate the reason(s) why having a baby is such a vital and necessary experience for her but she does indicate that she has fallen into the trap of committing the biggest human folly of them all.

"When I am low or down on myself I feel that perhaps even now I really needed a baby to fill some empty gap inside me..." In other words she experiences those flashes of cosmic 'aloneness' that freak us all out from time to time. Her solution for filling the gap is as predictably female as is the male one predictably male ie that of finding a sense of security by incarcerating wife and children in the proverbial castle.

Far be it from me to pronounce that there is anything inherently wrong in child-bearing, or even in the traditional family 'set-up', but what does strike me as wrong is that humans contrive to trap each other into unasked for situations or relationships and then seek to justify them by turning responsibility for them over to 'society'.

If Ms Slater had wanted a baby of her own and on her own terms, which she obviously did (ie: her first para) then she should have contrived to have one and rear it on her own and not expect the reluctant male to participate with equal shares which are attendant with the equal rights that she's jealous of. She should also have given a thought for the totally unwitting partner in this saga, the child itself.

There is not one indication in the article that Ms Slater regards the child as anything other than her possession which has the ability to give her love.

I recommend that all potential parents read Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* and *A Proper Marriage* for thoughts to chew on.

Yours,
Anon.

Bad Practice

* Dear Spare Rib,
I was interested in your article on Salpingitis (SR 61), which I am sure has helped many readers. I was unfortunate enough to require hospital treatment when I was 16 for this condition and in the years to follow when I complained to my doctor of similar pains she informed me that it was probably a

little inflammation and not to worry. Now four years later, I am a student nurse and have found that this chronic state invariably results in sterility. Although I have no plans for children I hate to think that at a future time I may be denied the choice because I did not receive prolonged treatment originally.

Also I would support your reader Jacqueline Wright (SR 63) who was upset by the attitude of doctors to patients. After a doctor interviews a patient in hospital the nurse often has to repeat and enlarge on the often inadequate and unsympathetic explanation.

I believe if more people were encouraged to make formal complaints the situation might improve for us all.
Yours in hope,
Anon.

WAR with Spare Rib

Dear Spare Rib,
In *Spare Rib's* 'reports' of Women Against Rape and particularly the public trial (SR 62), attacks were made on an occasion which gave women the opportunity, for the first time in the history of England, to hold their own trial, and give testimony about all kinds of rape.

Spare Rib pooh-poohed the idea that women get raped because they have no money, yet later described Jayaben Desai's speech on Grunwick as clearly showing that economic exploitation and sexual coercion are closely linked. And then went on to deny that this was a speech about "rape by low wages"!

The broadness of the concept of rape was also attacked; they complained it was always tied back to women having no money as though our poverty had nothing to do with the degradation that is our lives, whether it be at work, in police stations, hospitals, courts, on the street or at home, where women are raped, and at the very least subjected to sex object treatment, cat calls and slave labour.

Spare Rib let industry and government off the hook for being ultimately responsible for rape and its continuation, yet these are the people who created and maintain the structure which allows women to be treated so cheaply, which takes so much that women have to give, and gives back low wages, and rape of all kinds. Rapists have a deeper psychological motive for raping women than our physical weakness, and that motive lies in the results of women's poverty and subsequent social weakness, yet the writers continued to waste paper and time almost saying that if we don't open the door to tradesmen, we won't get raped.

The trial attacked the solid and wide ground of the reasons for rape, ie our poverty and powerlessness, which reasons should be obvious to any self-respecting 'feminist', yet according to "Rape Rally Wrangle", "the full spectrum of feminist politics are missing". What I would be fascinated to know

is if not every aspect of our lives was spoken about by various women at Trafalgar Square?

In their hurry to pair off and condemn the "Women Against Rape/Wages For Housework (WFH)" conspiracy *Spare Rib* neglected to make clear to its readers that these are two separate organisations. The WFH campaign has been enormously helpful to us in building the trial and the campaign against rape. Does *Spare Rib* think it is a put-down to be associated with WFH? Do they think it's a put down to be associated with housework?

We organised the trial in two weeks because after Carol Maggs' rape millions of women wanted something done. We're not a government department or a trade union, we don't have to go through channels. If we can't move quickly we're useless to women.

The speakers at the trial were not all members of WFH. Some were members of WAR, others members of WFH and WAR, and many were members of neither, including the women who came forward from the crowd to finally speak out on this unspeakable subject. The Rape Crisis Centre were invited to speak but declined the opportunity to "exploit" women's sufferings. If this trial had not taken place many women would have been forced to continue to stay silent—and that is exploitation—a lot less would have been known by society in general about rape, and the overwhelmingly warm and encouraging response to WAR and the trial would never have come about. I wonder did the article writer notice the more cautious approach of several judges very soon after the trial?

Spare Rib quoted Bristol Anti-Rape Group's rejection of the WAR analysis of rape and of our methods. I hope at the next national conference these people can tell us what they have accomplished and can come up with some novel ideas as to why rape happens—I can't think of any WAR have not already covered.

WAR asked *Spare Rib* for a page to reply to their articles, and after considering it at two editorial meetings they refused to print more than a short letter. Those who would like to see an accurate report of the trial, or want further information, petitions, our Statement of Aims (5p), dates of our open meetings, the Women Against Rape badge (15p) are invited to write to us at the Women's Centre, 138 Drummond St, NW1 or phone 01-624 6364 or 01-800 7379.
Orlagh O'Shea, Women Against Rape, London NW1.

Women for Life have asked us to print a retraction of our reply to their letter (SR 64) and deny they are associated with the National Front. We didn't in fact say that Women for Life were connected with the NF and apologise if our statement was ambiguous.

Just after 2 in the morning of July 11, Carol Frye, 25, a striking worker and mother of two children was shot in the back while on picket duty at an Essex International Factory in Elwood, Indiana.

Two figures were seen running away towards the factory. One of them wore striped trousers similar to those worn by the armed security guards employed by the company.

Months later the bullet was still lodged in Carol's spine because she could not afford to pay for the complicated surgery needed to remove it safely. But Carol has not been the only victim. Another worker was knocked down by a company lorry and beatings are commonplace.

The 222 employees, mainly women, went on strike on April 6 because the company had refused to make any improvements in the tiny wage rises offered in the new contract being 'negotiated' with the union, United Automobile Workers.

Despite all the intimidation the strike has now entered its sixth month. It is not hard to see why. The head of Essex's parent company, United Technologies Inc, is America's highest paid business executive at 1,662,000 dollars per year. The basic rate at Essex Wire, Ellwood, is around 5,200 dollars, which leaves some families below the official US poverty level.

Press operator Betty Morris says she has been 'an Essex slave' for eight years. "Know what my average yearly raises have been? Eleven cents an hour. Not much for my four daughters and me there! I've worked hard, given this company all the overtime it wanted, but it's never given me a thing."

Even before the strike began the company was playing it tough. They built an eight foot high chain link fence around the plant and hired a squad of armed guards, threatening to bring in scabs to break the union if there was a strike.

"Essex thought we'd be fighting one another to get back into the plant," said Georgia Ellis, a grandmother, who has done daily picket duty despite harassment and telephoned death threats. "But all this strike has done is pull us together so tight we'll never give up. We know the company's gonna mash hell out of us if we don't fight."

Essex flooded the area with advertisements of 'immediate

"We know the company's gonna mash hell out of us if we don't fight"

When Ellen Malos read in SR 62 & 63 about the occupation of an Essex International factory in Kilwinning, Scotland, she sent this report of a strike against the same multinational in Indiana, USA. But the level of violence and retaliation the strikers face there is staggering...

openings' for jobs. Hoping to create divisions, it made special efforts to recruit black workers though there had been no black production workers at the plant before. In fact those who came were unemployed whites from central Indiana and nearby states.

Scabs and security guards began firing revolvers and 'wrist rockets', powerful catapults using large ball bearings, especially during the night shifts. The union's blue strike bus is pock marked and scarred from the daily battles. The company got an injunction limiting the UAW to five pickets per gate and local sheriff's deputies to enforce it—but more and more townspeople joined the pickets and for several days early in July the strikebreakers stayed away and production stopped. Essex was losing the strike.

Then on the night of July 10, guards began firing at the strike bus from inside the chain fence. It was early the next morning that Carol Frye was shot.

"What Essex needed," said

the union Local President, "was a shooting victim, a 'civil disorder'. Somebody had to get hurt bad. That meant you couldn't lay back just taking pot-shots in the dark. You had to walk right up and shoot somebody in the back."

So the state police were brought in to maintain 'law and order' and make sure the scabs got through. "I wish we could enforce an injunction against the company as well as against the union, but we can't," said the commander of the state police unit. He called this "staying neutral".

Essex offered talks and a 'final offer' much like the first, a tiny wage increase spread over two years, no cost of living adjustment, no increase in pensions, no increase in sick pay and a few small non-cash improvements.

Then came the sting in the tail. 'Permanent lay-off' (the sack) for 11 of the most militant; permanent secure non-union jobs for at least 80 scabs and re-hiring of strikers 'as needed'.

Angrily the strikers rejected

the 'offer' and so the strike goes on. The company is still trying to get the 111 strikebreakers it needs to get a vote 'decertifying' the union. Under the provisions of the National Labour Relations Act that counts as 'half the workforce' of 222 who are on strike.

Some of the strikers have had their electricity cut off, some have no water, some have had to give up their homes and move in with relatives. But they are not giving in.

"We weren't all that much together before the strike," says Georgia Ellis. "We didn't know what was happening to our people on other parts of the line, on other shifts, or in their everyday lives. The way we looked at a foreman was, is he a good guy or isn't he? And even though our work was dull, we took pride in it because we did it the best we could."

"Now all that's changed. We share each other's lives. We know who's been sick, who's had their lights cut off. We've learned that in the crunch there's no difference between a friendly foreman and a mean one." □

Ellen wrote this report from material in 'Union WAGE' (USA) and 'Solidarity' (Canada, where there's another strike against Essex), and from her personal contact with the strike support committee. This is her latest news from a friend there.

"Latest event was that Georgia Ellis was beaten in her house on Wednesday (Oct 12). A man came in—must have been watching the house for a few days I believe — punched and kicked her, just enough. She is all swollen and black and blue and her mouth cut up. So courageous—she's in there fighting still, her family locking all the doors and leaving knives around for her. A Pickup (van) hit our best guy last night. He's going to be OK. All lies and cover-ups go out—he "jumped into its path" according to an 'observer'—he wasn't even picketing! No police investigation of Georgia."

Messages of support to Essex Strike Support Committee, PO Box 179, Elwood, In 46036, USA.

NEWS COPYDATES

SR 66—Nov. 18

SR 67—Dec. 16

If it's urgent, it's worth trying after these dates.

Can Elayne Phillips from Norwich please contact Jill at SR—we're afraid we've lost her address.

Banshees in Belfast

The first all-Ireland Women's Liberation conference was held in Belfast in October. Spare Rib asked two women who helped organise it and one who went over from England to give their views.

Women from all parts of Ireland (and further afield) attended this Conference, the first successful attempt to bring together women from different groups or none, from north and south, to try to find common ground and a basis for feminist struggle.

Before the conference the women's 'movement' was very dispersed, and consisted of four main strands:

- 1) The Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement is concerned solely with legislative change eg implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act, divorce law and family law reform.
- 2) The Socialist Women's Group based in West Belfast, with mainly Catholic support and a predominantly anti-imperialist line, which means opposition to the British presence in Ireland.
- 3) Irishwomen United. This strong feminist group, which publishes *Banshee* and has organised several successful campaigns, has been confined to the Dublin area and has not tried to organise in the North.
- 4) Women's Aid and other groups concerned with domestic violence. The politics of these groups varies greatly. Some are middle-class religious or charitable organisations; others, eg Belfast Women's Aid, have a radical feminist perspective.

The reasons why no strong feminist movement emerged in Northern Ireland as it did in other western countries in the late 60s/early 70s are, inevitably, tied up with our anomalous political situation.

Politically orientated women in Northern Ireland put their energies into the struggle for civil rights, in organisations such as People's Democracy. In America women who had been involved in Leftist movements tended to break away from male-dominated organisations towards the end of the Vietnam war. In Northern Ireland many women are still involved in groups supporting political prisoners and fighting Army harassment. They see the primary struggle as being against British imperialism rather than male oppression.

For historical reasons there has been no tradition of cross-border co-operation. This means that groups such as NIWRM and Irishwomen United have grown up confined to their own sides of the border.

Radical feminists in Belfast felt isolated, frustrated, bored and fed up. In June a group of us came together to organise an all-Ireland Women's Conference.

The planning group hoped the conference would open up communication between groups in all parts of Ireland, and that after the Conference we would be better able to co-ordinate our campaigns and other activities. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, we wanted to ex-

plore feminist theory and discuss how it could be applied in Ireland.

In the final session we decided to set up a telephone tree for quick communication and to start an Irish newsletter which would be produced by groups from Galway, Dublin, Limerick, Belfast and Derry in turn. Women from Dublin offered to organise the next National Conference there, early next year.

Some women from Belfast, including most of the Conference planning collective, decided to continue meeting regularly as the Belfast Radical Feminist Group. We left the conference exhausted, but very excited at the new prospects, and much more hopeful for the future. As feminists in Ireland we have a long struggle ahead of us, but now we feel a much greater sense of support and solidarity—a feeling at last of a movement.

Pat Allen and Maggie Fleming

Newsletter: First issue being produced in Galway. Contact Anne Good, Tigh Mhairtin Mhoir, Lochan Beag, Inverin, Co. Galway. **Belfast Radical Feminists:** Activities include discussion meetings on Sunday nights, CR group, trying to get a Women's Centre. Contact Pat, Belfast 667039.



LIZ MIDDLETON

Stone Walls do not a Prison
make,
Nor iron Bars a Jail;
But 'til the E.R.A. is Won,
We're only Out On Bail.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex; Congress shall have the power to enforce by appropriate legislation the provision of this Article."
The proposed Equal Rights Amendment

Women in the US have until March 1979 to persuade just three more states to ratify this Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution. If passed, it would affirm the potential equality of men and women. That is a radical concept. Whether or not its impact were radical would de-

pend upon how the amendment was interpreted by the courts.

The language of the Amendment (like that of the Constitution itself) is vague because it states a general principle and not the details of specific rights. But it does not delimit rights. Therefore it ideally allows women to argue for equality in every sphere—the home, the workplace, the government, the military, and so on. Once passed, its power would be greater than all other state and local laws which affect sex discrimination. The courts would have the power to interpret the amendment but could not remove it.

An amendment has to be passed by both Houses of Congress—ERA was in 1972—and then ratified by three-quarters of the states (38 out of 50) in order to become law. In that way it operates as a national mandate. By 1975, 34 states had said yes. But since then it's been under increasing attack. In that year only North Dakota passed it; New York and New Jersey, having previously ratified the national amendment, defeated similar amendments to their own state constitutions. Most feminists saw this as the turning point.

Because the ERA has become the focus for a backlash against all forms of feminism,

it has caused the women's movement to coalesce in its support—including radical feminists who first put it down as reformist. However it is NOW (the National Organisation for Women, first organised by Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*) which is coordinating the ERA campaign on a national level. NOW's membership is large and politically moderate, appealing to middle class housewives, business and professional women.

Antagonism to most kinds of progressive legislation concerned with sex discrimination has grown in the last two or three years. And the ERA has become a rallying point for right-wing groups across the country—the John Birch Society, the Klux Klan, the National States Rights Party. One Utah Birch group calls itself HOTDOG (Humanitarians Opposed To Degrading Our Girls). Phyllis Schlafly, politician and media figure, has got a lot of publicity denouncing the women's movement, in particular the ERA, articulating right wing fears in concrete terms.

For example, the anti-ERA forces raise the spectre of unisex toilets, mothers forced to join the workforce, loss of alimony and child support, no redress to desertion, women conscripted into the army, and homosexual marriages. Because

Belfast in the middle sixties on a day return ticket from Dublin had meant new shoes, or a new coat with C&A label on it (which in my childhood innocence I took to mean Catholics Anonymous); or even better still a cheap Japanese transistor 'smuggled' over the Border by my mother (pious Catholic that she was) in an apron sewn on the inside of her skirt; any bulge could always be passed off as yet another stoic pregnancy.

A far cry from the petty days of pirate smuggling and 'English Sweets'. Those 'emigres' of us who attended the conference had left Ireland before the days of any women's movement. Maevie in 1970, the classical 'country girl' sent over on the boat to her cousin the Jesuit priest who was to see her through her pregnancy; Cass, 'an ungrateful wretch who had fled her grand job in the Bank of Ireland for the flights and fancies of the City of Sin'; Joan, a more traditional ex-graduate part of the Brain Drain and Increasing Unemployment of '72; and myself, in '74 bewitched and bewildered, hot on the heels of an English 'Radical' who, bless his pulverising heart, was introducing me to my very own clitoris!

At least we're women crossing the great divide, I thought, not of the Mortgage-Minded Women-of-the-Peace-in-a-Fur-Coat Brigade; no, a disparate lot this, weaned all of us on the mythology of the Great Gombeen Republic land of romantic heroes (never heroines) of 1916, too soon to become Paradise for the Profiteering British, Canadian, Japanese, German and whoever else you are, with a tax free holiday of 20 years no less; and all that expectant labour to choose from... "Ah sure don't the nuns do a grand job!"

"Did you know," said one young one engagingly, "that Women Have Been Banned this year in the Republic? Yes after the Banning of *Spare Rib*, they've decided to go the whole hog and Ban Women... for a trial period of six months. The Bishops have welcomed the move, heartened that Ireland is once again giving the Western World a Moral Lead!!" Spurts of hysterical laughter, the necessary light relief, bitter, hard and sardonic, in the face

of increased repression in the South (the aftermath to Northern Politics), the spectre of that Great Octopus Mother Church, and a jaundiced interpretation by some of the left (not all) of the importance of feminist action.

But first the initial pulling and tugging of thoughts and experience: "What about Maria MacMahon, who got fined for sticking up a *Spare Rib* poster and been bound over for a year... for a fucking poster!" "And Noreen Winchester, raped by her father for most of her adolescence, killed him and got seven years for manslaughter!" "And the rapes of 'native' women by the British Army... the ones that get reported that is... and the lads welcomed back to their regiment being 'more useful' on the street than in prison." The Lord sends us these little crosses to try us. It means we've been specially chosen... to suffer!

Day II 'Feminism, Socialism, and Republicanism' or 'Bless us Father for we have sinned, some of us fail to make all the connections all the time'. Approaching one another tentatively aware of the differences in how the women's movement is developing North and South of the Border but aware too of the need to find common ground to work in. Women, yes of course in solidarity with women all over but caught in an effort to understand our own specific history; predominantly a history of nationalist struggle with centuries of sad and wilting songs to prove it too...

Self-mutterings: "Jesus why is there never enough time at these bloody things to talk things through" as we waft and wade through bubbling snippets trying to grasp a sense of the totality, with one fundamental question seeming to lead to another fundamental question, and yet another one...! The movement is as yet so small, 150 here and now, arriving from varying standpoints and desperately trying to accommodate one another. Someone manages to ask some piercing questions: "Can we afford the 'luxury' of disunity however healthy it is to acknowledge differences, in a situation where we have grave difficulty in mounting a mass campaign on even contraception?" Are we relying too much on feminism as imported

from America and Britain? Perhaps we should be looking to other countries with histories similar to ours, like Palestine or Vietnam or Kenya? Or perhaps even black women in First World countries who contend with racism as part of day to day living. New categories thrown up and thrashed out. For some the issues are frighteningly clear. A dash of cold water on nebulous speculation. "Look, the most obvious sign of imperialism, for the women of my area is the khaki shapes hounding our streets in W. Belfast. That's how most of us got involved in the first place," said Anne, mother of eight, and active in the Relatives Action Committee which seeks a return to Political Status for prisoners presently 'on the blanket' in Northern Irish jails. "Right Here and Now, the most important problem facing me and women like me is quite a mathematical one... How you get 30,000 soldiers on a boat... going home!"

We refrain from minimising the emerging differences, which becomes the healthiest aspect of the whole conference. There is no rush to have a National Organisation—"Here, sign on the dotted line, save face and prove that we can do it too." Problems in organising campaigns are regional, parochial even, but with 'The Border' playing its own unique historical 'role'.

We need more conferences in Ireland and the flexibility to organise day conferences where and when people need them, so that we can have national campaigns on issues like rape, lesbianism, battering. For details of next Irish Women's Conference contact Lynda Hall, 3 Henrietta St, Dublin.

Siobhan Lennon

Siobhan, an Irish woman involved in the Women and Ireland group, has been living in London for the past three years. Like many Irish women who 'left Ireland' before the women's movement in the early 70s, her thoughts on this conference are obviously coloured by her involvement in the movement in Britain.

the debate has been waged largely in terms of the ERA's impact on particular laws and institutions, it has been easy for the opposition to evoke these images.

Most women wish to understand how their own lives might be affected and seem quick to fear the loss of whatever limited security they think they have.

The right wing opposition is crude but well organised, stirring up the easily aroused fears of liberal men whose voting support is essential in male-dominated state legislatures.

But there are also objections to the ERA from the left. They centre around protective legislation (gained slowly and painfully by the unions) which seeks to control the number of hours women are required to work, the weights they are expected to lift and so on. Under the ERA this legislation would either be eliminated or, ideally but less likely, would be extended to men as well. Until 1973, the AFL-CIO (the country's largest union) was divided over the ERA, but then endorsed it. The Communist Party-USA continues to oppose the ERA, though Angela Davis, one of its leading members and a feminist, supports the amendment.

The experience of protective legislation has not, in fact, been wholly good for women. By being singled out in this way, they have continued to be considered a separate class in the sense in which the Supreme Court used the term in *Muller v Oregon* in 1908. That case accepted special protection for women in employment but included as justification a long speech about the inferior physical capacities and social position of women. The *Muller Case* has been used as precedent ever since in cases which have sustained state exclusion of women from overtime work, jury duty, work in bars and saloons, and even access to public universities.

The ERA should work against this kind of "averaging" (classifying women as a special case)—for example, it should no longer be possible to claim that *all* women are physically weaker than men, mature earlier, wish for children and so on.

The ERA is not just a consequence of late 60s radicalism: the legislation has been before Congress every year since 1923 when the National Women's Party formulated it shortly after women's suffrage passed in 1920. But for at least 22 of those years Representative Emanuel Celler,

Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, chose not to hold hearings on the measure. In 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act and in 1964 the Civil Rights Act. Yet women were not fully assured equal rights under either.

In 1970 Congresswoman Martha Griffiths of Michigan extracted the ERA from Committee by means of parliamentary petition. In one hour the House had passed the amendment 350-15 and had done so without hearings and without a committee report. Full passage was delayed slightly because the Senate passed a revised amendment necessitating a conference between the two Houses. Nevertheless, the amendment passed in the following Congress.

Since then the balance has shifted against ERA. It is now doubtful that final passage is possible, especially as the states which have yet to pass it are almost all in the South, by tradition not only very conservative but also jealous to guard states' rights against the threat of national directives. If the ERA fails to pass, it will not only mean a failure to assure women's rights but it will lend validity to anti-feminist arguments by implicitly working as a national mandate for discrimination. *Diane Debell*

INFORMATION TO
ANNY BRACKX
27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE
LONDON EC1

SHORTLIST TALKS & CONFERENCES

Women in the Salvation Army
18 November. Talk 7.30 at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1. Speaker: Marion Ward.

Jobs for the Girls—Problems of Women & Employment
19 November. Day conference from 10.00 in the Lecture Theatre Block (LTB2), Univ. of Essex. Speakers on women & the job market since 1945, sex discrimination and legal changes etc. Designed to involve local school-leavers, further education students, careers advisers, trade unionists. All women welcome. Exhibition, creche, accommodation. Fee £1 (50p students). Register with the Liaison Officer, Univ. of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex.

Northern Anarchist/Feminist Conference
19/20 November. 9.00-5.00 at the Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Sq, Leeds 2. Numbers are limited to 50. It's important for Northern women to contact the organisers with ideas for discussion and to inform them if you need accommodation, creche. Cost 50p excl. food. Register with Jan Wallis, or Kathy Watson, 80 Harehills Ave, Leeds 8 (0532 620535).

Feminist Arts at the next Women's Liberation Conference
20 November. Meeting 1.00-6.00 at the Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Rd, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12, to discuss how the role of arts as a way of communicating feminist ideas can be stressed at next year's national women's liberation conference. Write if you need a creche. Bring sandwiches; drink available. Contact the Birmingham Women Artists Group, 79 Blenheim Rd, Moseley, Birmingham 13.

Girls at School
21 November. Social evening 6.30-8.00 at Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. Last in a series of discussion meetings for girls at school. Tonight: informal discussion.

One Parent Families
23 November. Seminar 10.00-5.00

Spare Rib 24

at Caxton Hall, London SW1. Theme: sustaining the one parent family—the role of local authorities. Speakers on housing, day care, and children in care. Book in advance. Fee £2; 50p students; lone parents no charge. Lunch £2 (order in advance). Register with the National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Rd, London NW5 (01-267 1361).

The English Birth Control Movement 1870-1930
25 November. Feminist History Group talk 7.30 at the WRRRC, as above. Speaker: Jane Lewis. Further information from 01-622 4118.

Feminist Women's Journal
26 November. Open meeting 10.00-6.00 at the WRRRC, as above. After several meetings to discuss such a journal a group of women were delegated to write a draft proposal, which is available from Mary McIntosh, Dept of Sociology, Univ. of Essex, Colchester, Essex (send sae). The meeting is to discuss, alter and amend the draft with a view to agreeing on a firm proposal for the publisher.

Trade Union School
26 November. 10.30-5.00 at Friends Meeting Place, Church St, Reading. Organised by the Working Women's Charter Campaign and "designed to help women trying to organise and raise the question of women's rights on the shop floor and within the unions". Details from Anita Turnbull, 3 Coleridge Rd, London N8 (01-340 8060 x 54 day).

Bisexuality
29 November. 6.30 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. Speaker: Charlotte Woolf. Adm 10p.

Literature Of Their Own
2 December. Talk 8.00 at the WRRRC, as above. Speaker: Elaine Showalter on women writers and women's liberation.

Women & Education
7 December. Monthly discussion meeting 8.00 at the Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, Manchester 1. Organised by the Women's Advisory Cttee of the Manchester area CP. Details from Jean 061-928 8006.

Annie Barnes
9 December. Feminist History Group talk 7.30 at the WRRRC, as above. Speakers: Kate Harding and Caroline Gibbs on memories of an East London suffragette with recordings from the life of Annie Barnes.

Women's Liberation—a Mutation?
9 December. Talk 10.30 at the Meeting Rooms, Zoological Society of London (opposite main Zoo, entrance Regents Park). Speaker: Robert Trivers (who maintains Women's Liberation is a mutation, as we don't reproduce) talks on natural selection and socio-biology. Feminists needed.

Lesbians on Telephone Services
9-11 December. Second national conference at Wick Court, Wick (outside Bristol). Information from Bristol Switchboard, 32 Hill St, Totterdown, Bristol (0272 712621).

CAMPAIGNS & PROJECTS

Abortion
The Day Mr Miracle Blew It is a pro-abortion play. "It involves a man from outer space, Mr Miracle, who uses his magic powers to perform a few sex and gender role changes, with the unforeseen result that the 'male' of a married couple becomes pregnant." Available to groups who want to perform it, for the cost of duplicating and a token copyright fee. Write to Spare Rib, Shortlist (Abortion Play).

Namibian Women
The South West Africa People's Organisation Women's Campaign would like contact with Namibian women studying in this country, to establish a dialogue and develop an understanding of each other's struggles. Contact SWAPO women's campaign c/o 48 Newmarket Rd, Brighton.

Third World Women Workshop
Meets fortnightly to discuss topics chosen by the group. Membership is open to sympathetic non-third world women as well. The group takes an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist standpoint, and maintains an independent and non-sectarian stance. Details from 01-387 1640 or 01-622 0092.

Cheap Rural Base
"We are negotiating for a huge old army camp in the West of England, for use as a craft village and centre for charities." Any organisation or individual interested in a cheap rural base contact the Association for the development of a Craft Village & Centre for Charities, Steering Group, 48 Abingdon Villas, London W8 (01-240 1154 or 01-229 7253).

Socialist Feminists for Socialist Unity
"A group of about a dozen women committed to Socialist Unity (while also remaining involved with Leeds Socialist Women's Action Group) started to meet independently. We see our task as ensuring that the Socialist Unity election programme is genuinely feminist in its orientation. Contact Leeds Socialist Unity Women's Cttee, c/o 26 Roundhay Mt, Leeds 8, if you're interested.

Correction

The wrong tel. number was listed for the Prisoners' Wives Service (SR 61 London page). The correct number is 737 0223. They need volunteers to visit prisoners' wives. Contact them at 373a Brixton Rd, London SW9.

FUN & MUSIC

ALRA—A Woman's Right to Choose Campaign Benefit
23 November. 7.00 at the Southbank Poly, Rotary St, SE1, with Saffron Summerfield and Leon Rosselson. Adm 75p. Details from 01-399 5200.

Women's Acoustic Music Workshops
7.30-11.00 fortnightly workshops at the Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1, for women to play, sing, write songs and to learn.
27 November. Using microphones.
11 December. Christmas sing-song.

People's Festival
27 November. 11.00-11.00 at the Banqueting Suites, BelleVue, Manchester. Theatre (incl. Women's Theatre Group), Rock'n' Roll, debates (inc 'women's liberation'), folk, poetry, film, ethnic music and dance, exhibitions, competitions. For the children: magicians, puppets, fancy dress and a creche. Tickets £2 (50p children, pensioners, students, claimants); evening only 75p. Details from Bob Cole, CPGB, 28 Hathersage Rd, Manchester 13 (061-224 5378).

Slough Women's Aid Benefit
3 December. 8.00 at The Bell, King St, Maidenhead. With Jo-Ann Kelly & Pete Emery; and Alison Fox and Vixen. Proceeds towards the setting up of a refuge in Slough. Adm 75p.

ART

Women's Festival 77
For three weeks starting 29 November. Six days a week Tues to Sun at Action Space, Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St, London WC1. An extravagant festival of theatre, dance, music, crafts, photography, arts, literature, workshop and campaign discussions—all by and for women (see News shorts). Creche, accommodation, transport for the elderly and handicapped on request. Details from Women's Festival 77, Action Space, Drill Hall, as above, or Nancy Diugud 01-637 7664.

FILMS

Women's Cinema
3.00 in the Club Room, The Other Cinema, Tottenham St, London W1.
27 November. *Stella Dallas* ('37) with Barbara Stanwyck, and *Union Maids* about three women involved

in the early American union movement.
11 December. Special Christmas programme.

Women's Independent Shorts
4 December. 3.00 at The Other Cinema, as above, including *Portrait* (Jane Jackson), *Galaxy Last Tape* (Francine Winham), *Switch Off* (Ruth Carter), *Death Of A Bull Fighter* (Hilary Thompson and Caroline Sheldon). Discussion with the film-makers follows.

PLAYS

Pretty Ugly

The Women's Theatre Group's new musical show is for the 12-15 age group. They explain the problems created for teenagers by the images thrust upon them by the adult world, in comedy, music and song. "Through the eyes of Jackie, Carole and Audrey, three 14-year-olds, we examine the social and personal dilemmas that can arise when the individual and the image come into conflict."

25 November. 8.00 at The Basement, Shelton St, London WC2.
28 November. 7.30 at York Way Club, Delhi St, London N1.
30 November. 8.00 Fleet Community Centre, Fleet Rd, London NW3.
5 December. 2.00 and 8.00 at the Albany Empire, Creek Rd, London SE8.

7-9 December. 1.15 at the Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St, London WC1.
10 December. 8.00 at the Waterside Theatre, 99 Rotherhithe St, London SE16.

For bookings contact them at 27 Stepney Green, London E1 or Stacey 01-485 0239 evenings.

Voices

A play by Susan Griffin directed by Kate Crutchley and designed by Mary Moore, about five women of different generations and backgrounds—each has her own story, but the story changes in the telling as an awareness of the common oppression of women builds up.
30 November-18 December. At Action Space, Drill Hall, as above.
Wed/Thurs 8.00, Fri 8.30, Sat 5.30 and 8.30, Sun 8.30. Enquiries 01-637 7664.

Kiss & Kill and Floorshow

Two Monstrous Regiment plays. *Kiss & Kill* looks at domestic violence and *Floorshow* is a musical cabaret about the contradictions surrounding women at work.
Until 19 November. Both shows touring Manchester. Details from Rosemary Heesom (061-833 9471).
23-27 November. Both shows touring Liverpool for Merseyside Arts Association.

30 November-4 December. *Floorshow* at the Oval House, as above.
5-10 December. *Kiss & Kill* at the Roundhouse Downstairs, Chalk Farm Rd, London NW1.

17/18 December. *Floorshow* at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, London NW3.

JOURNALS & PAMPHLETS

The Prevention of Pre-term Birth

Most of the 10,000 babies who die in the prenatal period each year are born at least three weeks prematurely. Many more are handicapped due to a pre-term birth. According to this report the problem has not been adequately approached in Britain.

Greater thoroughness in antenatal care would increase the rate of identification of women at risk of pre-term birth. Following identification two categories of intervention have been developed in Europe. Shivodkar stitches in the cervix to keep it closed; a ring pessary for the same effect. Or delaying drugs, about which a careful evaluation is still lacking.

Such research and better antenatal care, requires an improvement in the status of maternity services and more money. To be present in this campaign is part of our struggle for control over our reproductive care.

Written by M & A Wynn, and available at £3 + postage from the Foundation for Education and Research in Child-bearing, 27 Walpole St, London SW3.

Nadine Cartner

*In Defence of the NHS

This pamphlet is essentially a reply to recent British Medical Association recommendations for a strengthening of private medicine and the introduction of a fee-for-service system. It presents a case for the maintenance of the NHS in its present financial structure and suggests areas where money could be saved, though not at the expense of patients. It contains a lot of useful statistical information, but leaves out a lot, including abortion and contraception, and neglects the cuts.

Available at 50p + 10p postage from Radical Statistics, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland St, London W1.

Liz Heron

The Social Base of Leeds: the Need to change the Way We Live

This is the second of a series of reports on the political economy of Leeds. Informed with a strong feminist perspective, it examines many of the factors determining urban life. In particular, the relationship between the economics of urban planning (transport, decline of manufacturing industries and the growth of commerce and service industries) and the organisation of personal life (expenditure on the social wage, housing policies etc) is explained. It demonstrates the extent to which the latter has been sacrificed to the interests of industry and commerce.

The pamphlet demands that the struggle against the way we live be organised both in the community and in the workplace and that women's labour, in and out of the home, is the means for integrating



Feminist/activist calendar 12" x 16" screen printed by the Workshop, 81 Lenthall Rd, E8. £1.50 incl. postage.

See Red Calendar

Six silk-screened two-colour positive images of women to keep you going through '78. 17" x 24"; £1.25 + 30p postage from 16a Iliffe Yard, off Crompton St, London SE17.

Big Red Diary

This year's diary is on the Politics of

Food. It tells you who gets fat from your eating and highlights the paradox that while the world is getting richer, our diets are getting poorer. Lots of information, nutritious but cheap recipes, as well as diary space. 5" x 7"; two-colour: £1.50 + postage from Pluto Press, Unit 10, 7 Chalcot Rd, London NW1.

that struggle. Though the bones of the pamphlet belong to Leeds, the flesh on them is Britain.

Written by the Leeds Political Economy Class/Ron Wiener and available at 50p + postage from WEA, Swarthmore Education Centre, 3 Woodhouse Sq, Leeds 3.

Lee Comer

* News Release Oct/Dec 1977

Release is now producing a new quarterly publication called *News Release* (30p), to cover the fields it works in. Its first issue examines the Criminal Law Act and its effect on drug charges and squatting. There are also articles on the confused policy on drug addiction treatment, and police practice as manifested in Lewisham and in the arrest of Maurice Jones, and an amusing look at the vultures who decide our fate in Magistrates Courts.

Release, 1 Elgin Ave, W9. New opening times: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri-10am-6pm. Thurs-2pm-10pm.

Barbara Charles

* The Inevitability of Matriarchy

This pamphlet describes without compromise the political and social nature of patriarchy and places the development of slavery, feudalism, capitalism and Marxism squarely in the context of the 'rise of patriarchy'. It is an indigestible read,

but contains a great deal of information and analysis; words that could be mystifying are explained and there are some useful references. What's missing is a sense of excitement, of gleeful recognition, of sheer delight that so often comes through in the writing of the matriarchy, today. I like the title; if I didn't believe it both as a statement about the past and as a projection for the future, I think I would give up.

Written by Elisabeth Lawton, and available at 50p.

Liz Cooper

* Women, Music and Feminism

"It is one of the ironies of bourgeois ideology that women are told that having children is every bit as creative as writing a symphony; yet when it comes to music broadcasting they (and their children) are given a stultifying backdrop of pop songs, and the only opportunity of using music creatively to bring children up is the appalling 'Listen with Mother'."

Women, Music and Feminism—Notes in: *Musics* No 14, available at 35p + 10p postage from 48 Hillborough Ct, Mortimer Cresc, London NW6. Sub £2.80 for six issues.

* indicates that the publications are also available from the Publications Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1.

Shadow Woman

Performance art is the result of a cross-fertilisation of dance, the visual arts—painting, sculpture, etc—and the theatre. It's a contemporary form used by artists with different art training who are interested in working live before an audience. Tina Keane, feminist and visual artist, was drawn to performance art because of its immediacy and flexibility. She has been working for over a year on a performance called *Shadow Woman*, a piece about the influences passed down through generations of mothers and daughters. Natasha Morgan watched Tina and her six-year-old daughter Emily perform *Shadow Woman*, and afterwards asked Tina about her ideas.

When I saw the performance it was done in a constructed artificial garden, upstairs at the Acme Gallery in London's Covent Garden. There was an audience of about 30 people, mostly fellow artists, who sat quietly on the ground or stood at the back of the room attentively watching. There was no announcement made to indicate when the piece was to begin or what to expect.

The piece begins with a young girl—Emily—playing Hopscotch on her own in the garden. Meanwhile Tina begins to lay 13 small mirrors across the Hopscotch numbers; on the mirrors is written a poem, which Tina reads out as she lays the mirrors down:

*The shadow of my daughter
becomes the shadow of my life
as I will become the shadow of hers
as my mother
grandmother, and
great grandmother.*

As the child plays her shadow is projected on to a large white screen.

Tina: "As I place the mirrors over the numbers, my shadow, larger than the child's, totally dominates hers, and I move away again, leaving the child free. As the poem goes on and the mirrors are placed around her, the area of movement becomes restricted—smaller—because as life goes on you get more and more restricted."

Watching the beginning of *Shadow Woman* I remembered the amazing feeling of freedom as a kid, playing in a garden in the evening, thinking maybe the grown-ups in the house had forgotten me, had forgotten it was long past my bedtime.

Tina: "Yes, 'Out in the garden, Go and play.' So you are shoved out into your own world. That's why I thought to use the Hopscotch game in *Shadow Woman*. It's universal and totally classless, coming right through the ages. Everybody knows it. It's the same ritual over and over again. And the Hopscotch I chose was the one which goes to thirteen—the beginning of being a teenager. When you first menstruate, everyone gets worried—my god, my god, the boys, the boys. Restriction. My daughter is becoming a woman and goodness me, goodness knows what might happen.

The girl notices her freedom begins to diminish as the boy becomes free-er and free-

er. 'Where are you going? What are you doing? What time are you coming back?'—that's why she gets smaller. Meanwhile the shadow of the mother gets larger and looms over her because of her fear of and for her daughter's sexuality—because of the repercussions of society and all that implies. And that fear goes on until a woman gets married. Then the mother feels safe. She can relax.

The whole thing began with the sudden realisation one day, looking at Emily, that if I wasn't very careful I'd be putting things on her of myself—maybe things I disliked intensely; things my mother planted in my head, ways of doing things. One is part of a chain and it goes right down the line. So, I was looking at Emily and wondering how does one ever break that consciousness—not wanting to break it in such a way that one becomes fanatic about it, but wanting her to think of herself not just as a girl, and boys are boys, but as a human being, living and growing."

After the Hopscotch sequence, the focus shifts from the outside to the inside. The outside was the garden and the game—for Tina, symbolising fantasy, growth, mystery, potential.

Tina: "And the inside is the restriction we spoke of, and takes place behind a large white screen. The lighting changes, Emily goes off and you can just see my silhouette, a shadow projected from me as I sit, veiled as it were, behind it. This I call the waiting section."

Here Tina reads *Waiting*, a long and hypnotic poem by American poet Faith Wilding, which is about the passivity of waiting from the time of one's birth as a baby girl till the day of one's death as an old woman—waiting to be pretty, waiting to be old enough to make-up, to date, waiting for one's wedding day, for orgasm, waiting for a child to be born...

Tina: "And I feel we've got to break away from this. We have the opportunity as women now to change the rules of the game; to make it more open for us. It's not that we don't like being women—it's that we don't like the restrictions of being women."

In the first performance I left it at that, although I felt the ending was a bit negative. So when I came to the second performance I decided to use an open-ended film sequence of waves that I'd taken in Scotland earlier this year. And then over that someone read a descriptive bit from Virginia Woolf's book *The Waves*.

Using the film of the waves gave the performance a much more optimistic feeling—I made it on a boat going from Skye to Harris. To me it was a magical journey. The sun was in the right place, the boat was the right size, and I looked down and saw time moving in amongst the shadows. I got my camera out and I just intuitively began to film these waves. One thing the film had—it had optimism, it had the universe and it had energy, constant energy. That's what I like about the film, and the fact that those shadows on the water could be you, they could be me, they could be anyone. People coming, or people who have been. It could be a hundred years ago—anywhere, anybody.

You see, the whole idea of male art is very much tied to the idea of making art that will last for ever. So, in a sense they become monuments. I think that the art that comes from women is organic and not particularly lasting. I don't think women are thinking of trying to make themselves great artists with works that will last after their death, that will put them on a pedestal. It's to do with the whole NOW and LIVING."

Did you choose *The Waves* passage because you identify with Virginia Woolf?

Tina: "Not so much her, no, but her work. I like the idea of using other women's work that has influenced me. She's a very visual writer and has always been a progressive thinker—always urging women to be creative, understanding their needs."

How do you feel when you are performing?

Tina: "Beginning a performance I feel very insecure. I find performance art one of the hardest ways of working. You have to put yourself on the line."

Why don't you use actors to perform the words?

Tina: "It wouldn't be the same. I suppose it's directly to do with the whole thing of sound being part of the texture. It's me putting over my experience as me, and people seeing my insecurity and identifying their own insecurities—if people can see others who are also insecure doing things it breaks through the mystique. That's a criticism I have of theatre—the mystique."

All you have to have is a positive feeling about something that you want to say. And then you need a structure—the rules of the game. The danger is either being too spontaneous or too formal. . . I've tried to combine the two—to mix the intellect with the intuitive part so that one has a structure within which one can be fairly spontaneous. The importance of not having a total script is actually trying to respond to the audience—see who is there. Different places you go you might slightly change it."

Do you rehearse?

Tina: "No. It's not fixed in that way—but it's still very formal, the precise drawing out of the hopscotch lines, the well-made screens. It's very disciplined. And that's important—to have self-discipline, but within that to know no boundaries."

I wanted it to be even more formal, more deliberate—or else I wanted to know it was deliberately not deliberate.

Tina: "One has to guard against being too rigid, too mechanical—because if one learns one's lines incredibly well, then after a while the meaning of the lines starts to disappear and the person saying the lines starts to be too mechanical. The main thing about performance art is, I think, sincerity. If I don't think the person is sincere then I can't believe in their performance."

The film at the end, and the performance itself, is not meant to tie anything up, to give the final word, to conclude anything. It is continuous. Because even if I don't finish it . . . people pick up on things . . . someone else might.

The piece I'm doing next is going to be on the streets, where I'll write texts on the walls and use the streets as a labyrinth and do the Hopscotch on the pavements. That's communicating outside. But I have to start inside—like in your own home—where I feel secure." □

Tina Keane will be performing *Shadow Woman* at the Women's Festival, at the Drill Hall, Cheyne Street, London WC1 on Saturday December 14.

Ruth A day in the life of...

is in her twenties, and lives with her Orthodox Jewish parents in Manchester.

"Blessed art thou, o Lord our God, king of the universe, who hast not made me a woman."

That is the prayer a Jewish man says when he rises, and that is the first prayer I hear when I attend synagogue on Saturday mornings. I attend always with the same feelings of familiarity, scorn, mockery and guilt. Guilt is the main reason I go, as I live at home and my family are extremely devout Jews who see religion as a complete obedience to the prescribed laws. They would never default from these 635 laws, not even secretly.

On a Saturday I put on suitably modest and respectable clothes without a hint of unconventionality, and on my way to synagogue meet other similarly attired girls. We all smile benignly and wish each other a 'good Sabbath'.

In the synagogue I usually sit on my own, and although I join in some of the prayers out of habit I spend most of the time in some sort of fantasy world, dreaming of what I would do if I weren't there, of what I will do in the future, and of how all the oppressed women in racial minorities will rise and unite!

Cooking is forbidden on the Sabbath so all the food is prepared in advance, which is an advantage in that women can sit down with the family. The rest of the week it is customary for the women to wait upon the men and then sit down and eat what is left.

We all say a short prayer and then sit down to a lengthy heavy meal, with my father in the most comfortable seat. We all have to sit quietly for half an hour while he goes through the laws relating to conduct on the Sabbath. For twenty years the ritual has been the same and so I am now able to sit at table and look interested without hearing a word of what is said. Communal singing follows but the women are excluded from this - they are not allowed to sing in front of men because a woman's voice might turn a man on. The serving of the meal is entirely done by women, as is the clearing up afterwards. The men sit back and have coffee brought to them.

Due to the heavy meal and the lack of anything else to do, on Saturday afternoon I usually go to bed for a sleep as this helps while away the hours. Not only in my house but in all the surrounding ones in the ghetto a deathly feeling of torpor reigns.

As the average Orthodox family in the ghetto has at least five children*, provision is made for suitably supervised activities to take place on Saturday afternoon. The girls and boys from four upwards attend separate youth clubs. Dancing, singing and games last for one hour and then the children are despatched home to their parents.

By five in the afternoon, satiated with food and sleep, I begin to feel waves of claustrophobia and terrible boredom passing through me. The strictness of the Sabbath laws limit one's choice of activities severely. The alternatives are visiting friends (girls), going for walks, or studying the books of the sages. Reading contemporary literature is outlawed because of its subversive effects. In my house and in most of the neighbours' there is no television or newspapers because of the danger of corruption by morally debauched programmes.

I have very few friends acceptable to my family as I have severed most of my childhood friendships with Jewish girls. I have plenty of non-Jewish friends at work, but of course I would never be able to bring them home. I do not know any Jewish boys as my education was in single sex institutions from the age of three to twenty-one. This is not atypical among religious Jews, and for this reason arranged marriages continue to flourish. My heterosexual relationships have always ended in failure, usually because I am very prudish, and would never get undressed in front of anybody. And as I have been reared on the idea that sex is for procreation only I cannot get used to the idea that it can be done just for pleasure. Pleasure, I have always been told, is synonymous with sin and suitable for animals!

My Saturday night diversions are carried out with extreme trepidation. Driving a car is not allowed, nor is using public transport, or handling money. To avoid distressing my family I have to walk to an area where I am unlikely to be recognised. I usually conceal my money and make sure I do not have loose coins as they jingle too much.

Once on the bus I am always greatly relieved, and feel that I have shed my Saturday persona to become myself, to some extent anyway. When I visit friends they always laugh at my impeccable clothes but I don't bother with lengthy explanations - for how can one explain a life full of contradictions?

I'm usually just happy to be out and away from home and family until 11pm, when I have to be back to celebrate the ending of the Sabbath and the ushering in of a new week. The oldest single girl in the family holds up a lighted candle as high as she can so that she may find a tall husband . . . prayers are recited, frankincense inhaled . . . and I fervently thank God that another Sabbath is over.

* Birth control is strictly forbidden except on health grounds.

In Spare Rib 60 we asked readers to describe a day in their lives. "We want to know," we appealed, "how you cope with six kids or the Social Security office, with your job or your marriage or your multiple multiple relationships." We also wanted to hear readers' ideas - visionary or practical - about how their lives could change. This month we publish two of the responses.

Janice

lives in Glasgow with her husband and two young children.

My day begins when I get Ben, my husband, up for work at 6.30am. He works as an electrician with a private firm, but is going to work on the North Sea oil-rigs shortly. The pay is good, although it means he will be away from home for four weeks at a time.

We live in a tenement flat in Glasgow. It is quite a pleasant area - plenty of shops, library and pub in the vicinity. We have two children, Maxine, aged two, and Lawrence, who is one.

After my husband leaves for work I wash up the breakfast dishes, then read till about 8.30, when I give the children their breakfast and change them. I tidy the flat after that, and the kids usually try to help me, which means the housework stretches to about three hours instead of two. They take such obvious pleasure in 'assisting' that I don't mind at all.

It is time for their nap then, so I have some lunch and read again. I read in every spare moment, and don't think it an overstatement to say that between me and insanity lies a pile of books - mainly non-fiction, occasionally a novel. Through them I feel I can transcend my day-to-day existence, which often seems mundane and meaningless. However, I realise that this literary immersion brings its own danger - of rejecting the real world and turning one's life into just one more abstract idea. The isolation of being confined in the home most of the time exacerbates this feeling of unreality, I am sure.

To get back to the practical - I wake the children about 1.30 and take them out. I joined a mother and toddlers' playgroup six months ago which has been good for both the children and myself. About ten children under three and seven mothers congregate on two afternoons a week in the local community centre. In between playing with the children the women chat and have a coffee. Unfortunately it has stopped for the summer break just now, so instead I take the children to the park, then shopping.

A few weeks ago the weather was very warm, so off we went to the local park. I was sitting on the grass watching them playing around - Lawrence tottering after Maxine on plump baby legs and she, full of business, issuing garbled orders at him - and I thought how wonderful and comical there were, and wondered what justification there could be for my feeling resentful, frustrated, bored, which I often do. Of course that was in one of my more euphoric moments, so I could not find an answer. I wish such moments would come more often.

When we get back from the afternoon outing, I make the children's dinner, then Ben arrives home and we have ours. Ben is a good husband and father, in that he does not go out a great deal by himself, and helps me with the children in the evening. We used to get on well together, but since I had the children

things have changed. A feeling of impotence began to pervade my life after they were born (not post-natal depression I might add), which seems a paradox, considering the sense of potency and fulfilment motherhood is said to bring women. In fact thinking about that contradiction has often made me hark back to the cliches and attitudes I most hate - 'Can I truly be a woman if I do not feel . . . such and such?' I do love my children, but then again I often find myself standing outside watching them and my husband and myself 'being a family'.

After we have dinner I bathe our children and put them to bed. I usually read in the evenings, unless there is some unfinished housework to do, or a television programme I particularly want to see. I do not like watching television very much, as most of the films and series are either blatantly or subtly sexist, which really irks me. Unless one has a very powerful sense of one's own identity the images of super-efficient housewife, plump soft mum, sexy siren, little girl lost, slither insidiously into one's consciousness and then make their appearance in scraps of behaviour one knows are inauthentic. To take an example, when Ben can't find clean socks which are staring him in the eye or flounders helplessly in front of a cooker, I have caught myself thinking 'Men, they are useless when it comes to looking after themselves' - and up pop images of the wise, motherly wife and the rather silly husband - images employed again and again in advertisements. I think women in the home are particularly vulnerable to role suggestion, because they are not interacting with the outside world in a work situation where they would have to assert their personality and forge some sort of separate identity for themselves. This is how I feel, anyway, and because of that vulnerability am happier not watching much television.

I write of my thoughts and feelings, rather than what I physically do - I suppose because I do not do very much except housework. Perhaps it all sounds a bit negative, but when one has young children and cannot afford - or does not want - to put them into a day nursery, naturally one's activities are greatly restricted. During the past two years I have attended evening classes on various subjects, but unfortunately I won't be able to this coming session because of Ben's job on the rigs.

My lifestyle can't be changed at present, except in fantasy, for I feel my children need me to be with them until the youngest is at least three. When they eventually start school, perhaps I can go back to university and complete the course I interrupted in order to have my babies. That is what I would most like to do.

To complete the picture of my day, I usually go to bed about 11.30, and as it's now 11.27, I'll say goodnight.■



Ann Dean—determined to continue the occupation

Hounslow: raid and rally

Hounslow Hospital was wrecked on October 6. Supper was being served to the 21 patients in its two wards, visitors had come with flowers—when a squad of private ambulances and vans arrived with a police escort, crossed the picket line, seized all the patients and bundled them off to West Middlesex Hospital.

Now a banner outside the hospital invites local people to “come in and see the devastation”. The raid, organised with military precision, was carried out by the Area Health Authority and involved 30 people including administrators and senior nursing personnel.

Staff were shocked and outraged as the elderly patients, three of them in their nineties, were hustled into wheelchairs and dragged off without being given time to collect personal belongings or even put on dressing gowns. Flowers, food and bedding were scattered all over the floor; false teeth and even one patient's medical records were left behind in the raid. None of the patients was physically examined to see if they were fit to be moved. Nurses said angrily that seeing such treatment had changed

their attitude to the health service, after years of being told by superiors that their first responsibility was to the patients. Sister Cynthia Scott said, “If I'd ever treated patients like that I'd have been sacked on the spot.” She and other nurses were powerless to stop the wreckage of their hospital, which had been kept open by a work-in since March.

Before leaving, the raiders dismantled the beds and took the bed springs with them to ensure that no more patients could be admitted. The wards were padlocked and hospital staff had no access to them until three members of the Defence Committee climbed through a window with a camera crew from ITN to film the devastation. But Ernest Steppens, Administrator of the Hounslow District Management Team in charge of the operation, has actually claimed that the hospital staff did the damage themselves!

The legality of the AHA's action has been questioned—the closure had not been agreed by the Community Health Council, patients had not been consulted about being moved and relatives were not informed. But the next day

the AHA did manage to send each patient a bouquet of flowers by Interflora!

A decision was immediately made to stay put in the hospital. Since then more than a thousand local people a day have been coming in to see the damage and give their support. As two teenagers in school uniform signed the petition a nurse said “It's good that kids see it. If young people had done anything like this they'd be called vandals, and these were Hospital Administrators, educated people with responsible jobs.” Two elderly women who were former patients talked about the friendliness and care they had received and how different it would have been in a large general hospital. As they surveyed the wrecked ward they said that they would rather not go into hospital than go somewhere else—the nearest hospital now is the West Middlesex, where long staying

patients find themselves in wards with acute medical and psychiatric patients—very different from the calm atmosphere and friendliness of Hounslow. One patient had been in Hounslow for three years and considered it her home.

The meaning of the cuts is becoming clearer to many people—the dismantling of the Health Service, the closure of hundreds of hospitals and complete disregard for the health and well being of the patients. In Hounslow District alone closures are causing the loss of 130 beds and 200 jobs. Many small hospitals in the London area have already closed and over the next year 106 more closures are planned.

The timing of this raid is significant—an AHA meeting was planned for October 12 and two lay members had proposed a resolution to keep the hospital open; the Community Health Council was in sup-



Sister Cynthia Scott—shocked that patients could be treated so callously

Birmingham: nursery waste

There are six nurseries in Birmingham, newly built and fully equipped, which cannot open because the Conservative-controlled Council refuse to find the money to staff them. The Education Committee voted 50 to 40 against opening them even though the waiting lists for all of them are 200 or more.

In response to this, women from the James Watt nursery school in Handsworth marched to the Council House and gained entrance to an Education Committee meeting, only to realise that discussion on the nurseries had been deferred. They heckled the Councillors present, but were thrown out.

These local mothers have now joined with a group from the Working Women's Charter to form the All Birmingham Campaign for Nurseries Now. Most support so far has come from the Handsworth area, but they hope to involve more women from other areas. They plan to leaflet the six infant schools to which the nurseries are attached and have scheduled a week of action for the end of November, hopefully with stalls and street theatre in the centre of town.

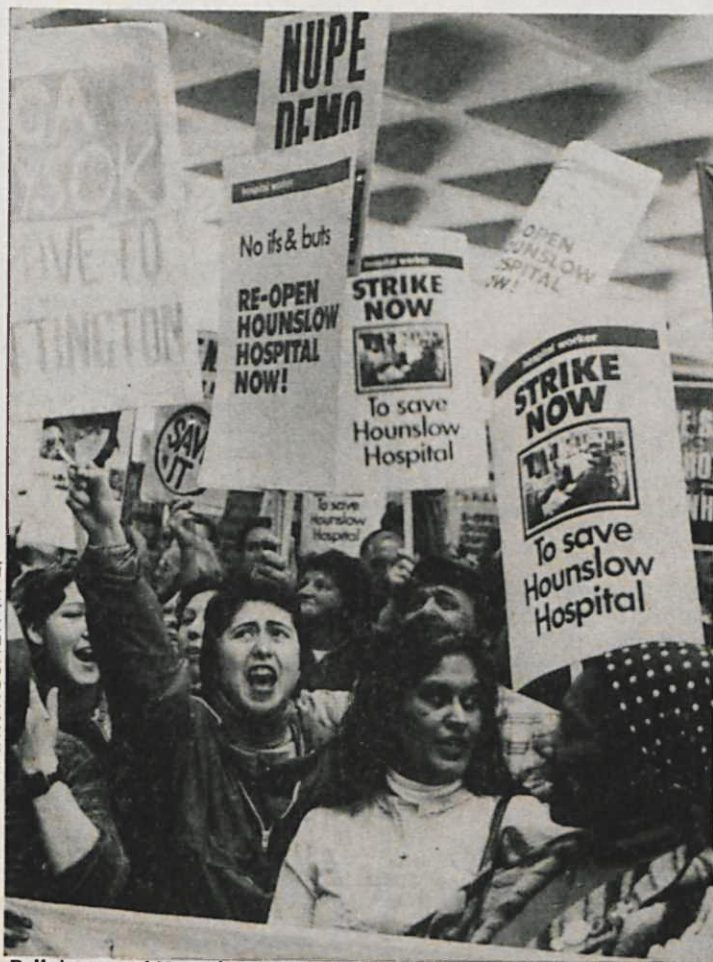
The Campaign is concerned to highlight the whole issue of day care for children. Val Jones from the Campaign described how, in Birmingham, women have to be classified as "socially deprived" just to get on the waiting lists. As with abortion, Ms Jones pointed out, you have to be a potential child batterer to get what should be every woman's right.

The unemployment rate among trained nursery nurses is scandalously high, yet the Council still refuse to staff the six new nurseries. The Campaign needs all the help it can get and can be contacted at 193 Berners St, Lozells, Birmingham (021-523 4697). **Cindy Harris**

Yet another hospital due to close because of the cuts is Redlands Women's Hospital in Glasgow. The Greater Glasgow Health Board says the closure is due to the declining birthrate in the area.

Redlands is one of the few hospitals in Glasgow which does abortions, and the only one where nearly all the staff are women. They have started a petition to keep the hospital open, hoping that enough signatures will encourage the Secretary of State for Scotland to reconsider. □

Any messages, support etc to Redlands Women's Hospital, Lancaster Crescent, Glasgow.



Rallying round Hounslow Hospital, October 12

including the introduction of a fee-for-service system—represent a real threat, despite continued assurances from the DHSS that the NHS is functioning better than ever. The deterioration of the NHS and a move towards more private medical care affects not only health workers' jobs but the lives of millions of people.

The occupation of Hounslow continues and local people together with workers from other hospitals

are helping maintain the picket. On October 18 Hounslow Borough Council passed a resolution to re-open the hospital. More beds have been brought into the women's ward so that eventually patients can be admitted again. Nurses are touring other hospitals to ask for support in their fight against the cuts.

Liz Heron

Contact the Defence Committee, Hounslow Hospital, Staines Rd, Hounslow, Middx (01-570 4448).

port. Forcibly closing the hospital was one way of pre-empting any decision that might be made.

When the meeting did take place it was lobbied by hundreds of health workers and other supporters including pensioners and women's groups. 21 London Hospitals were represented, several under threat of closure: EGA, Plaistow and St Nicks. After a long wait it was announced that the meeting had decided not to vote on the proposals but had called for a Public Enquiry.

As demonstrators waited, speakers stressed the urgency of the struggles and occupations in hospitals all over the country. In spite of the numbers of women there, only one woman spoke from the platform, Kate Truscott, a cleaner at Charing Cross Hospital. She and other women later said that although most health workers are women, union meetings are dominated by men. The problem is not always lack of confidence, but the difficulty many women have in taking an active part when so much of what is said relates to trade union and industrial experience, but ignores women's immediate experience and problems related to the home and family.

While it is vital to have the support of industrial workers, it is also important to involve other groups. Women from the EGA pointed out that their campaign would not have continued without the consistent support of women's groups, tenant's groups, local squatters and pensioners who have frequently been the mainstay of the picket. The cuts together with recent proposals from the British Medical Association—

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events

■ Women and Children Housing Co-op Meeting Brent Women's Centre, 138 Minet Avenue, London NW10. 8pm Thurs, 17th Nov, to discuss What We Want, How To Go About It.

■ BENEFIT PARTY for North Paddington Women's Centre, at Cryptic One Club, Bishops Bridge Road, London W9. Three live bands, clowns, food and drink. Advance tickets—510 Centre, 510 Harrow Road, London W9 or on door 90p or 60p claimants.

■ Frankie Armstrong sings at the Cauldron Women's Disco, Sols Arms, Hampstead Road, London NW1. 8pm December 6.

courses

■ WOMEN'S WORKSHOP 3-4 December at Pellen Centre, 58a Kenilworth Avenue, London SW19. For women who are interested in PERSONAL GROWTH by increasing their SELF-AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING and ASSERTIVENESS. Cost £10 Deposit £5 (in advance) to Jackie 01-204 3558 or Anna 01-946 1430.

accommodation offered

■ Single mother, feminist, needs same to share cheap rented house. Box 655.

■ Mature student, mid thirties, ten year old son, house London N8, seeks 1 or 2 women to share living, expenses, politics (Socialist feminist), fun. Box 657.

■ Person preferably with young child wanted for mixed collective house. Brixton, London. Ring 01-674 5235

■ Feminist photographer looking for a feminist to care for small baby part time in exchange for room, board, and extras. Would suit someone on the dole and or doing political/artistic/literary work or study. Contact Michael Ann—01-607 4728.

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publications

■ WOMEN'S FIGHT, the bi-monthly paper of the WWCC raises the demands and organisational perspectives vital for the interests of women. Subscription £1.50, or 10p (+7p postage) for Autumn issue to J Daniels, 1a Camberwell Grove, London SE5 8JA. 01-701 4173.

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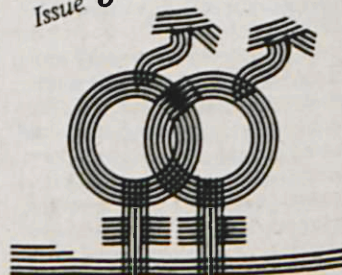
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groups

■ **MEETING** of Hammersmith-Chiswick Women's Liberation Group on 24 November, 7.30pm, Hogarth Hall, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4. For women wanting to join a local women's group.

■ **KENT/SUSSEX** sisters—where are you? Don't feel isolated, join us in new feminist group based Tunbridge Wells. Box 656

■ Any women interested in forming a self-help therapy group in **HERTFORDSHIRE** contact Carol, Hatfield 72249.

■ **HIGH WYCOMBE** area, new Women's Aid/feminist group forming. Phone Gil—Wycombe 29947.

■ I am interested in joining or forming group **BEDFORD** area. Maggie, Bedford 48495

■ **WESTMINSTER CHE WELCOMES WOMEN.** Meet us 8.00pm upstairs bar Westminster Arms, Storeys Gate, London SW1 or phone David 01-504 3846.

■ **ROMAN CATHOLIC** feminists unite! 01-886 0779/Box 654

contacts

■ Any socialist feminists in **PETERBOROUGH** please contact Mandy Wharton, 137 Stumpacre, Bretton.

■ **Attractive female 30s** seeks friendship/close relationship with similar, Bedfordshire area. Box 658.

■ **HELP!** Young gay woman teacher new to Exeter area needs congenial company. Box 653.

■ **Gay woman 30** wanting own child seeks sympathetic guy. Box 6501

■ **Bi-sexual** wishes to meet fellow sisters in **LAMPETER CARMARTHEN** area of Wales for active thoughts and close personal friendship. Box 650.

■ **Lesbian 30s** seeks genuine relationship. Divorced. Family West Country town. Interests—esoteric teaching. Music. People. Home life. Box 651.

■ **Alphonse, 27, German,** speaks English, would like to meet feminist woman for progressive relationship. I'm living in London and enjoy contemporary art. Box No 6502

■ **AMERICAN** guy wanting to meet English girl, marriage in view. Box 659.

messages

■ To Mary in Salvador, Liana in Houston, Marion in Bloomfield, and Valerie and Emily in Montreal; love and sisterhood, Ruth and Vanessa. ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼

reviews

Clapper-claw

Clapperclaw are entertainers. A four-woman band, they sing and they take the piss. They're at their best doing feminist satire: singing very solemnly "Grandperson's Advice to the Boys", an old Temperance Song ("Everywhere experience shows It pays to be a man"); sending up a very serious number from the 1942 Rochdale and Pioneer Songbook—"The Girl with a Spanner in the Pocket of her Pants"; taking off Ronny and the Ronnettes—"I got me a helluva fella—He's got a jaw like a cliff—and he's seven foot tall—the women they just fall for him—but he went and ditched them all—when he saw my face." They play on women's supposed bitchiness—"If I catch any of yous gals—hanging around I'm gonna—get me my big machine gun and—mow you all down"—but make a huge joke of it as they sidekick, simper and smirk. When I saw them at a left-wing benefit, women in the audience were surer what the joke was, laughing themselves silly; the men looked a little ill at ease. And like all satire, it can be misunderstood; their spoof sexiness has been taken straight.

To 'clapperclaw' means to revile, to scratch and bite, noisily. The noise comes from all kinds of acoustic instruments—clarinet, guitar, kazoo. They scratch at men, at Maggie



"And one day soon we'll march in state/'Neath an arch of spanners at the factory gate
And all our mates will be cheering the romance/Of the girl with the spanner in the pocket of her pants"

Clapperclaw in action

Thatcher, the dole queue, the jubilee. They do squatting songs—gleefully acting policemen—a few straight socialist songs and some lyrical folk like 'The Ant and the Grasshopper'. "We need the softer ones too," says Caroline John, "or it would be just too raucous. But we're not very good yet at the patter in between. It's necessary be-

cause the songs are so different."

They started last September when one of them put an ad in *Time Out* for 'competent musicians to sing socialist songs'. Only two women answered. This June Caroline joined. Though it was coincidental at first that they were all women, she says it's grown on them now. "It

wasn't a policy decision but it feels right. Men tend to be more strident, harder. We don't want to lecture people."

Jill Nicholls

Clapperclaw are keen to play at benefits, radical conferences etc. They make a pub/club-type atmosphere—if there's a rock band for dancing, they go down well before, or between sessions. Contact them at 87 Bulwer Road, London E11 (01-558 3396).

theatre

THE BELLE OF AMHERST
(Phoenix Theatre
London)

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts, into a New England Puritan heritage. She spent her whole life in the family house, the Homestead. It is only a hundred years later, and certainly not in her lifetime, that she has been acclaimed as one of America's greatest poets.

The production of *The Belle of Amherst* seized on the discrepancy between the apparent constriction of Emily Dickinson's physical environment and the vast teeming spiritual universe she wandered. It exploited this to show how



Julie Harris

a deeply conventional, patriarchal family both enclosed and isolated her, yet also propelled her into fortitude, into the

dexterous construction of defences, and into poetry.

The play is a monologue spoken by Emily Dickinson, played by Julie Harris. We, the audience, are invited in to take tea with the eccentric recluse in her white frock whose words (taken from her poems and letters) soon reveal her to be intensely human, warm, witty, and yet also passionately lonely in her suffering, her curiosity, her searches of the spirit. The play works by association, a favourite poetic device—Julie Harris leaped from anecdote to reminiscence, musing to witticism. By the end of the evening, tremendous rapport had built up between the audience and the character of Emily Dickinson—due not only to the beautiful shaping of the play but also to Julie Harris's performance. She spoke the poems in a way that illumin-

ated Emily Dickinson's unique punctuation of dashes, sense of music and harmony, and elliptical concentration of syllables; she summoned up swiftly shifting images of wry sister and aunt, pain-wracked death-confronting soul, loving friend, shy, misunderstood and therefore lonely writer. The intensity of the performance matched that of Emily Dickinson—at the end of a very moving evening, I went away with tears on my face, and as Emily Dickinson said in one of her poems: 'the red in my mind'.

Michele Roberts

Emily Dickinson's poems are published by Faber & Faber: The complete poems of Emily Dickinson £8.50, hardback, £3.95 softback. A choice of Emily Dickinson's work £1.30 hardback, 75p softback.

reviews

KISS AND KILL

by Susan Todd

and Ann Mitchell

(Monstrous Regiment

Theatre Group

Monstrous Regiment's first two plays looked at historic events (the French Commune, 17th century witchcraft) through women's eyes. Their third play looks at the situation of people (mainly women) today, dealing with the complexities of love and

sexual relationships in which violence, physical and psychological, is an ever-present element. The play is built up with a series of short, often funny scenes, punctuated by songs which pick up themes from the scenes and are sung to a simple conga-drum accompaniment.

A number of relationships are followed—starting with the separated husband who subjects his wife to recurrent telephone abuse, adding a family where the man, an active trade unionist, the wife,

depressed and withdrawn, and the daughter, a wild and bored street-gang girl, are at loggerheads of misunderstanding. Finally there is a receptionist having an affair with her boss; a former GI, embittered by American violence in Vietnam, and a woman trade union activist. The relationships overlap, so that there is a dramatic unity, but there are a lot of mini stories to follow through and this makes the early part of the play a bit hard to follow. Also, there are perhaps too many set speeches which provide us with 'background' information about various characters' childhoods.

But the real strength of the piece is the way each scene unfolds—like a series of snapshots in a mobile album—to demonstrate the traps people are caught in. Lou, the separated wife, driven to frustration by her husband and other pressures, takes it out on her son; the male trade unionist, deeply sympathetic to the day-to-day trials of his workmates, is simply unable to understand his wife's day-to-day depression.

The schematic structure of the play places the ideas firmly before us: in an exploitative society, personal violence gets handed down to those lower down in the social pecking order. All the characters reach a point where they realise something must change, and the final scenes have everyone in a (literal) hurry, catching trains and buses, all 'moving on', in however small a way. The company's brisk and sensitive style matches the demands of the piece, and the scene-changing, set and music are models of maximum economy with maximum effect.

Micheline Wandor

See Shortlist for touring dates.

books

A WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME

by Marge Piercy

(Fawcett paperbacks)

Marge Piercy is an American poet and novelist who, in her work, draws on years of involvement with the left, the student movement, the women's liberation movement, and the ecological movement, teasing out, in each novel or collection of poems, some of these various strands. *Small Changes* is perhaps her best-known novel so

far, an account of the beginnings of the women's movement in Boston in the early seventies. *A Woman On The Edge Of Time* also deals with the big city in modern times, but with what Marge Piercy sees as the horrors of a highly-developed capitalist society as experienced particularly by women. It is the story of Connie, a tough, struggling Puerto Rican woman, who intervenes to stop her niece being beaten up by a pimp and is committed to a state mental institution as a result. The system works by Catch-22: Connie has been in hospital before, as a result of once hitting her little daughter, and so now is seen as mad, bad and dangerous, whatever she says or does. The crux of the book is Connie's unwilling participation in a neuro-surgical 'experiment' with terrifying implications: the technological control by the state's doctors of those labelled by the same doctors as anti-social and deviant.

Interwoven through the plot, and crucial to the message of the book, is Connie's relationship with Luciente who travels back in time from a post-capitalist future where society is being rebuilt by the people in accordance with their physical, emotional, ecological and sexual needs. We are shown babies produced by artificial insemination and born in womb machines, to be mothered by several men and women to combat the destructive narrowness of the nuclear family; care and sensitivity lavished upon natural resources such as earth and water; newly-created group rituals around death, birth and puberty. As Connie slowly comes to believe in this world, so also she comes to believe that she must take responsibility for her own life now, dominated as it is by life-crushing repression. Her choice of the only political act of struggle available to her in the hospital after she has undergone a horrific brain operation ends the book. The implication is that in this way she will safeguard the future in which Luciente lives, and make its achievement possible.

One of the most interesting aspects of this novel is the way that Marge Piercy has chosen to use the mode of science-fiction, as some other American feminist writers are now doing. Science-fiction in Marge Piercy's hands provides her own particular gestalt—her dreams and visions of the



Kiss & Kill—with a little help from her friends.

A LITANY FOR WOMEN ARTISTS

Hannah O'Shea, in her programme notes, describes her Litany as "a sound poem for unaccompanied voice . . . chosen as a means of celebrating the lives and activities of women artists of the past, to make 'visible' their names and to encourage . . . present day women artists."

Within a single spotlight, Hannah O'Shea, in formal dress, carefully positions her music stand. She strikes a tuning fork and gravely intones in measured plainsong, the names of 600 deceased women artists.

The stream of alphabetically ordered names, changing in texture with the various foreign pronunciations, de-

velops a powerful hypnotic quality. Amongst the 600, the few names that we recognise remind us of the many who lived and worked in obscurity.

The 40 minute performance at the Camden Women's Centre was a strengthening experience for at least one feminist who arrived in a foul mood on a cold and rainy night and went away feeling less isolated.

The Litany has been performed in Berlin and Frankfurt, and elsewhere in London. It will be done again as part of a programme by Women Performance Artists within the Women's Festival at The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies Street, London WC1 on 17 December.

Natasha Morgan

reviews

future are represented by the figure of Luciente and the beautiful, hopeful society she inhabits and constructs; her despair and depression about what she sees as our status as victims in a damaging, ruthlessly-controlled society are typified in the figure of Connie. This split is not, I think, fruitfully healed in the novel, for we are not shown enough how Luciente's fresh bright struggling society can possibly grow out of the murderous one Connie inhabits, except insofar as we see Connie about to strike out at the end of the novel. Marge Piercy's leap of the imagination shows us what might be, but it remained for me a beautiful dream; her imagination does not circle back in the novel to link the two worlds more firmly. The world of the mental hospital, portrayed as a symbol of our society, is too totally horrific and depressing; it's difficult to see any mass struggle emerging from it, and I couldn't believe that Connie's act of revenge alone would push history onwards.

For me, science-fiction is a romantic and idealistic literary form in that it projects personal wishes and fantasies into a concrete future, much as dreams do, spreading them out

for our delight and appraisal. Its handling in this novel unfortunately ensures that dreams and wishes can't be politically used; they remain far-off, in only a possible future. In such a deeply political novel I found this a flaw. In terms of Marge Piercy's own work, *A Woman On The Edge Of Time* represents a return back beyond *Small Changes* to her earlier novel *Dance The Eagle To Sleep*, a portrait of America as a monolith brutally crushing the ardent struggles of the youth movement organised in tribes and bands. Perhaps this reflects the change in Marge Piercy's own life, her move away from the city to living in the country which she describes so beautifully in her latest collection of poems. But since so many of us do live in large, sometimes soulless cities, and have to root our political struggle there, I found the despair about cities in this latest novel ultimately depressing.

Michele Roberts

A Woman On The Edge Of Time (£1.70 plus 20p postage) and *Marge Piercy's latest collection of poems Living In The Open* (£2.80 plus 40p postage) are available from *Compendium*. Her novel *Dance The Eagle To Sleep* is unfortunately currently unavailable.

Humphrey Noyes, founder of the mid-18th century Oneida Perfectionists who believed in group marriage, regarded communal living spaces as a prime object since they 'get beyond the little man and wife circle', but they never resolved this particular problem.

Only in the 20th century, with Alice Constance Austin's plan for a socialist city at Llana del Rio did both house design and urban plan allow women to be 'relieved of the thankless and unending drudgery of an inconceivably stupid and inefficient system by which her labours are confiscated'. Yet in 1917 this scheme foundered; the communards moved to Louisiana and Austin remained behind offering her scheme, eventually, to real estate developers.

An Eldress in the Shakers—a breakaway Quaker group founded in the 18th century—expressed herself unwilling to 'bend over the cradle and sing lullabies' and certainly she and other members of utopian experiments were able to share their unpalatable tasks—but in the end these tasks still remained women's work.

In the final chapter of Dolores Hayden's book, she gives a brief survey of contemporary forays into this field: it is noticeable how the alternatives now tend to extremes—either feminist strongholds, or communal experiments not unlike those of a hundred years ago, just more self-contained and less moralistic. Women's place within utopia is perhaps as difficult to identify and achieve as is utopia itself.

(The book's price is crippling, but perhaps your library can be pressured into buying it.)

Gillian Darley

WORDS AND WOMEN:

New Language

in *New Times*

by Casey Miller

and Kate Swift

(Gollancz £4.50)

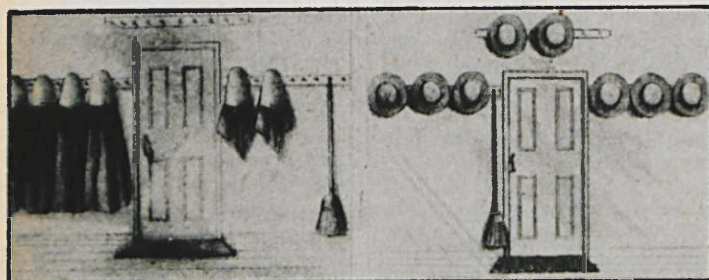
Every *Spare Rib* reader has a wealth of experience of the kind of resistance we encounter when we try to change the language. How trivial, chortles the opposition, winking at each other, and spilling out the Personchester 'joke' for the trillionth time. Well, this book has a particularly good chapter ('Who Is Man?') devoted entirely to proving to anyone but the most determinedly ignorant *homo sapiens* that Man cannot, does

not, and never did mean And Women.

Casey Miller and Kate Swift are experienced journalists, and their book is easygoing and witty—on the whole they avoid the trap they are trying to expose—trivialising the subject of sexism in language. There is careful research to back up their arguments, and many interesting and often moving references as to how the patriarchal origins of language oppress women. They remind us of how we have to suffer the double-edged pain of verbal sexual abuse—both as the recipients of foul insults and then as 'deviants' if we use that language ourselves in retaliation. A great deal of any culture's sense of 'normality' and 'morality' resides in its language and its language usage, and this book is rich in examples relevant to women.

The authors recognise only too well how clearly linked power and language are: "The question 'Who Is Man?' it seems, is a political one, and the very ambiguity of the word is what makes it a useful tool for those who have a stake in maintaining the status quo." But they do not examine the status quo in any detail in spite of the fact that the whole field of the relationship between language and class is obviously an important one. Working-class women in the Women's Liberation Movement have been raising questions about the language middle-class women use, and they may well feel this also has to do with maintaining the status quo within the Movement.

We have to bear in mind that almost without exception theories about language origins, acquisition and usage have been devised by white middle-class males, who inevitably assume that middle-class white patriarchal English is the true means of civilised discourse in our cul-



Entrances to men's and women's rooms, opposite sides of main hall, Shaker communal dwelling, New Lebanon, New York, 1873.

SEVEN AMERICAN UTOPIAS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF COMMUNITARIAN SOCIALISM, 1790-1975

by Dolores Hayden

(MIT Press £12.75)

Dolores Hayden's book is the first attempt to provide an analytic framework for communal experiments—many accounts of the vast number of American utopian foundations exist, both contemporary and retrospective, but by comparing the organisational and architectural aspects of the Shakers, Mormons, Fourierists, Oneida Perfectionists, Amana, Union and Llana del Rio colonists the

author has achieved a valuable synthesis of communal aspirations.

Among the many aspects of failure and success of the early utopias, the reality of women's roles rarely matched the ideals. Although the reduction and collectivisation of traditional women's work was a goal, sex stereotyped roles were never eliminated. Mechanical inventions, facilitating cleaning, cooking and even child care (Fourierist multiple cradles for their creches, for example) were important both as sources of income (via the patents) and as time-saving devices, but essentially the strong divisions between activities remained. There was a universal dislike of individual housing: John

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reviews

ture. I read, for example, in today's paper (*Sunday Times*, 16/10/77) the following amazing statement from Max Morris, 'socialist' headmaster of a London Comprehensive School, where 80% of the children are black: "Should I create a black curriculum? Should I put Creole on the timetable? Over my dead body, and the majority of my parents would cheer me to the skies. They want their children to get jobs. I will not even allow patois plays in the school. It must not be elevated to linguistic status at the expense of English." It is quite clear in the mind of this man that white man's English reigns supreme. Needless to point out that white women will not be the only group oppressed by such attitudes. And it is these attitudes which are so powerfully prevalent in nearly all our schools where 'non-standard' speakers of all groups are patronisingly offered 'remedial' work, adjudged 'unacademic' and all the rest of that claptrap that supports the class system with its co-dependencies on linguistic sexism and racism.

Words and Women starts at the point of our everyday irritations as women, and goes on to provide us with a good

little stockpile of ammunition. But my feelings are that this would very soon be depleted. Enjoyable as it is always to read through a collection of such apt illustrations, the book is ultimately a cul-de-sac. Despite a chapter called 'Language and Liberation' we gain little sense of the way out. Understanding the primary role language plays in our lives as social beings within the power structure won't be vastly increased by the book because the authors have too narrow a view of who oppresses whom and why.

Susan Hemmings

WOMEN'S RIGHTS— A PRACTICAL GUIDE

New extended edition

by Anna Coote and Tess Gill
(Penguin Books £1.25)

This revised edition of the *Women's Rights* handbook is extended both in size and in the range of its concern—in itself a reflection of the expansion of the arena of feminist politics. This has come out of our growing awareness of the necessity of involvement and feminist analysis in areas

not traditionally labelled 'women's issues'. Amongst the additions are sections on unfair dismissal and redundancy, the whole gamut of tribunals which one is likely to face, domestic violence, industrial injury and other non-contributory benefits, and an exposition of the Sex Discrimination Act.

Three years since the first publication has not only seen many changes in welfare benefits' legislation but has also altered the context in which the second publication occurs. Our original scepticism as to the usefulness of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts has now been confirmed in practice. The short history of the Acts' implementation and interpretation naturally raises questions about the uses and limitations of legislation against women's oppression.

Whilst not entering into the complexities of the relationship between 'men in power' and 'power in men', the handbook simply states that "the authority which men exercise over women is a major source of oppression in our society—as fundamental as class oppression"—and this, justifiably, is its theoretical framework

throughout. In addition, it carefully situates the particular rights in the campaigns and struggles which surround them, and personal choices are at all times tied into their legal and financial consequences. As long as legislation affecting women's rights is highly tokenistic and shot through with let-out clauses and while most of the knowledge of what our rights are anyway still remains the property of groups of professionals, this guide remains an important contribution to that struggle.

Sue Lee

PHOTOGRAPHY

by Richard Greenhill,
Margaret Murray and
Jo Spence

(Macdonald Guidelines £1.00)

THE PHOTOJOURNALIST:

Mary Ellen Mark
& Annie Leibovitz

(by Thames & Hudson £1.95)

"Photography," say the authors of the Macdonald book, "is often just a glorified excuse for women to get their clothes off." Too true—and nowhere is the idea more

films

NEW YORK NEW YORK

Just as *A Star Is Born* was a vehicle for superstar Barbra Streisand's singing, so *New York New York* is for Liza Minelli's. Now, it's nice of Hollywood to let us see women making a success of their work. Pity, though, we're only allowed to see that work and success inasmuch as it carves up their relationships with their fellas. It constantly fascinates me, the way our struggles for equality and liberation are refracted and come back at us in distorted snatches in contemporary Hollywood films.

The film opens on VJ day 1945 with demobbed forces of both sexes whooping it up. Jimmy Doyle, a breezy young tenor sax player (Robert de Niro) is taking advantage of the euphoria to go determinedly on the make. His nervy bullying come-on routine eventually sweeps up Francine Evans (Minelli), a WAC with singing aspirations. His impetuous love-making (or chauvinist cheek) sweeps a mildly protesting Francine into



Liza Minelli and Robert de Niro whooping it up in *New York New York*.

marriage, and then the struggle for control really starts. They go on tour, and a lot of good spiney sax-playing and sumptuous square-shouldered black dresses later Francine's singing is catching on nationwide, and her musical confidence is growing. In a rehearsal she chivvies the band about their slack tempo, and sets the tempo herself. Jimmy can't tolerate this usurping of his control and lets fly, "Don't

you ever kick off the band again. I kick off the band, don't ever forget that."

After this outburst Francine tries to do the very female thing of reconciling the irreconcilable—pursue her musical development and avoid threatening her husband's ego. Minelli acts out with conviction the tremulous uncertainty this sort of situation produces, particularly in a scene where, pregnant, she is signing a contract with a big

record company, and wanting Jimmy's help and co-operation in working out the schedules of publicity tours etc. Jimmy merely sits in a sublimely unco-operative sulk. Their conflicts culminate in a big physical fight in Francine's late pregnancy and they split up. These parts of the film are quite tantalising in that these battlings contain elements of real-life struggles between men and women, and there is a critical slant in the way the film depicts Jimmy's egotism and his clinging to supremacy. But the latter part of the film is a less than convincing portrayal of anything, and it's hard to understand how Martin Scorsese—who directed *Mean Streets*—could sign his name to this ersatz stuff. Cut to eight years later (only a male director could breezily elide eight years of a single mother struggling to bring up a kid and be a singing star. But of course, women's lives only have importance when they're with men—get it?) Francine has a large, polite son and a national following from her star parts in dreary escapist 50's musicals. She runs into Jimmy. They arrange a date. Both break it. I didn't shed a tear.

Alison Fell

reviews

frequently perpetuated than in the literature associated with the medium. It is not just that women are exploited for fashion and advertising, the fact is, that from Bellocq's pre-1920 portraits of New Orleans prostitutes to the handbooks thrown in with the purchase of a new camera, naked women have always been, as it were, fair game for anyone with an eye for recording more than the family on holiday.

To the general public photography is a technical mystery. Most people just cannot understand why, having invested larger and larger sums of money on a camera, their pictures actually come out worse. Both *Photography* and *The Photojournalist* go some way towards demystifying the process, although they follow very different paths.

Photography provides a wealth of easily accessible technical information—how to process films and make good quality prints, how to shoot under every kind of lighting condition; it also raises provocative questions on every page concerning the rights and wrongs of depicting subjects

in certain ways. For example, it makes the point that photographers have, by and large, "failed to recognise the reality of near-mythical places, recording only well-known landscapes or images fitting preconceived ideas". The parallel with the way women have been exploited by the camera is obvious. Just as such one-sided views help reinforce existing attitudes and sustain ignorance concerning foreign cultures, so the unquestioning photographer shares considerable responsibility for the distortion of women and the way they are regarded.

The Photojournalist is part of a series entitled 'Masters Of Contemporary Photography'. In order to illustrate how the photojournalist works, two successful women have been chosen which is, in itself, pretty unique. Annie Leibovitz has for several years been chief photographer on *Rolling Stone* (a fact conveniently overlooked in the recent TV documentary about the newspaper) and Mary Ellen Mark is a particularly sensitive photographer who has worked for *Ms*, *Esquire* and *Paris Match*.

Like the other books in the

series, the personal attitude of the photographers and, to an extent, their lifestyles are discussed. We learn not only how Mark and Leibovitz cope with different lighting situations, but how matters such as plane schedules, obstinate subjects and hostility can affect the end results. The book is even written from a fairly feminist stance, asking questions such as "How much of a woman's perspective is determined by the way society is structured against her?" It raises the question of how hectic work schedules affect the photojournalist's personal relationships, and the sheer shock of reading through a technical section which speaks of how "she" did so-and-so is refreshing, especially when the text is not obviously referring to someone specifically.

Although there is nothing remotely condescending about the way in which this particular book is written, it is important to examine how publishers are exploiting feminism for their own financial ends. So any commitment to women's liberation is meaningless while the handbook entitled *Photographing Women* remains in this otherwise excellent series. This

is so sexist that it verges, to my mind, on pure pornography. And yet the association of this volume with others in the series that discuss the work of such eminent people as Bert Stern, Art Kane and *Life's* Elliott Erwitt gives it a credence and respectability and 'elevates' it above the more obvious porn.

The Photojournalist presents the lives of Mark and Leibovitz for the reader in a way that suggests glamour and excitement, but at the same time this is probably terrifying to most women who would rather confine themselves to simpler situations than engage in manipulating the likes of Warhol, Jagger and Dali in order to make the cover of *Rolling Stone*. The technical detail included suggests that it is aimed at the more advanced photographer but it actually covers much of the same ground as *Photography* which is altogether more accessible with its less showy presentation. As far as the latter is concerned, there is no other "How to do it" book available which even touches on the serious implications of the medium and ways of seeing, let alone with the degree of commitment and kind of explanation, even limited as the authors are by the space available.

Val Wilmer

ANNIE HALL

Debate rages over whether *Annie Hall* is the funniest film of the decade or of the century. That's funny in itself, because the film is about the misery of life and the failure of personal relationships. Its original title was 'Anhedonia' (pleasurelessness). The opening joke, the lead-in to 1½ hours of non-stop hilarious wit goes: "Life is full of loneliness, misery and unhappiness, and it's over much too soon."

Alvy Singer, the successful Jewish comic and scriptwriter played by Woody Allen, lives alone in Manhattan. He's been in analysis for 15 years. He's always been miserable, he jokes, even as a kid. He's always been hung up about women, he jokes, even in primary school. His relationships end and he doesn't know why. He lost interest in his first wife, grew hostile to his second; and now Annie has lost any sexual interest in him. The film starts: "Annie and I broke up. I still can't figure out why." I think we can figure it out!

The film creates their romance from the initial awkward chat-up, brought alive by subtitles of what they're really thinking being flashed up on the screen—"I wonder what she's like naked?"

"I wonder if he's a schmuck like all the rest?"

They do fall in love. They are happy together for a while. He convinces her she can sing. She appreciates his humour. But he does make her feel she's stupid. He gets her to enrol for an adult education course, and gets jealous of her professor, even though as Annie says it was he who never wanted to make any real commitment. It was he who was nervous of her sharing his flat. And it's he who can use his neurosis to oppress Annie, it doesn't work the other way round. Though Annie must satisfy him sexually, he ridicules the young journalist who does manage to get satisfaction from him, rubbing his jaw ruefully saying "All this emphasis on orgasm can be taken too far." Despite his macho parody, which is good, Alvy is both sexist and hypocritical. Their sexual tensions start. She needs grass to relax her enough to enjoy fucking. He just wants to keep on fucking. Neither of them understand each other here, or feel that they should make any attempt to, but take their problems to separate shrinks.

Outside of their relationship life is pretty barren. His work is all alienation, writing scripts for people he sees as idiots, leaving him constantly on the

verge of nausea. Success is phoney and its rewards sickening. We learn far less of Annie's life and feelings. On a visit to her anti-semitic WASP family, we do learn of her brother's chronic suicide fantasies. So when they break up, they're both lonely. Other people remain strangers. Coming together again, Annie feels stronger but remains guilty when she can't meet his sexual demands. She goes to live with a Los Angeles tycoon, and though Alvy gets miserable and jealous, she will not return to him.

The film ends in nostalgia for the wrecked relationship—Alvy recalls their fleeting happiness. A realistic ending! "Relationships are totally irrational and absurd. But we need them." It's hard not to be struck by the odd conservatism of the film, nor to notice what's missing. For a film about sexual relationships, it's amazing that Alvy and Annie don't actually ever talk about sex. There's no mention of contraception, not even as a source for Alvy's jokes. Above all, there's no comment on their isolation. It's always her and him, or her and the next lover, him and the next lover, never a hint of a sustaining friendship. Only the shrink.

There's no real glimpse of

why their relationship can't meet their expectations of it. Yet this is not surprising when the expectations are that it should be a substitute for life itself, the only human relationship in a non-human world. And in this inhuman world, where all is stupid, crass, or phoney, Alvy reduces every social factor to a private woe. It's just the inspiration for another joke; "Politicians have ethics one, rung below child molesters."

For Alvy and Annie, as for most of us, only personal life seems meaningful. Only there outside of society can they be themselves, do they feel they have any power or control left. But is this private realm outside of society? The 'mature' ending simply conforms to the sophisticated consumerist notion in sexuality and relationships as well as in everything else from cars to cameras. Personal life doesn't have its own 'laws' separate from those governing the rest of society. We do experience the split between 'work' and 'life', an outer world of alienated labour and an inner world of personal life, as some deep psychological reality. But this split, itself part illusion, is what erodes our

reviews



Eve and Andrew making a brick.

It seems stuck, so they bang it hard on the table.

Eve and Andrew learn about mortar, brick laying and hear how bricks are made, in *Bricks and Mortar, Sand and Water* (Hamish Hamilton £2.50) by John Claxton and Sally Doganis, the latest of the non-sexist *All In A Day* photo-information books for under-fives.

Children's Rights Workshop

children's books

The Kids' Book Group, a collective of six women writers and illustrators, got together in 1974 to express, in a concrete way, their dissatisfactions with contemporary children's books. They produced first of all a poster—'Some people have one job, some people have two jobs' and have just had published the first two in a series of four books, *How We Live* and *How We Work* (Kestrel Books £1.50 each), reviewed in SR 63.

Did you set out with the intention of writing alternative books, or simply to analyse and criticise what was already available?

From the beginning it was a writing group, centred round producing reading books and books for slow-learning kids. We wanted to write very simple books and we particularly objected to the Ladybird books which are so widely used in schools. In those books sex roles are stereotyped and the family is always white middle class, living in the suburbs with two kids and a car. That wasn't reality for most of the kids we were teaching. We felt

search for personal happiness. The isolation of our private lives destroys our dreams of sexual happiness. But is Woody Allen's commonplace pessimism really inevitable? While pondering this, we can have a good laugh at this black comedy.

Lynne Segal

that the way the family was represented was a crucial issue.

What did you see as an alternative way of representing the family?

It was difficult for us because we're all middle class and originally we fell into the trap of seeing working class people as stereotypes, so when we started writing we were producing families with drunken fathers, raucous mothers and kids who were booted outside to go and collect dad from the pub.

Was that because you thought that working class people had to be shown with problems?

No, the reason we decided at first to concentrate on social realism was that we wanted to present more kids with a world that they would recognise. The kids that we taught were mostly working class and some did have problems like that. But we realised in retrospect that we came unstuck because we were actually trying to write stories to a formula, and it didn't work. We had rotten stories... not even stories, just awful situations. Anyway, drunken fathers aren't confined to the working class.

Were some of your difficulties due to the fact that you were

working in a collective?

Yes, that was a big problem, because none of us had ever worked collectively. There was also the problem that very few of us had experience of writing children's books. We weren't able to write loosely. We were all bringing individual texts for criticism and finding it very difficult to accept criticism.

Do you find it easier to accept now?

We trust each other now, but it took over a year to loosen up, to become an effective work group. At the beginning it was hard because you're insecure about your work anyway. And it's harder to take criticism from people whose opinions you really value. It's important that other feminists like your work, more important than when you go to a commercial scene.

Did you want a situation where people could develop skills like writing and illustration?

In writing yes... because originally it was just a writers' group. Our emphasis was on getting a book onto the market to reach an audience, so we felt it was important to have professional illustrators—we started off almost employing the illustrators. We treated Christine the way a publisher's editor gives an artist a brief, giving her a list of things to go in the drawing, and never involving her in the group's discussions. Our ideas have changed now...

What did you, Christine, as an illustrator, feel about being treated like that?

I had to tell people that I couldn't just go on drawing to a formula. I had to say "I'm a feminist too and I want to discuss these issues." My way of working changed a lot after that. Whereas before I would finish the drawings before showing them to the group, thinking that, by God, they had to be perfect, now I wouldn't dream of doing that. Now we all discuss illustrations together as I'm working on them.

What do you think about the effectiveness of books like these? Do you think that they can actually contribute towards developing a non-sexist and class consciousness in kids while there are so many other things influencing them?

There are very few books like these around. They're a drop in

the ocean, but it's a start. We really need to develop a scheme to replace Ladybirds...

... eventually we'd like to go into that area because we feel we could have more influence there. Just now, though, we want to contact teachers who are using our books because one of the ways that the books work is that you can talk about the issues they raise with children.

In *How We Live* we say that some people live with just their mums and some people live with just their dads, and that some kids live in children's homes. A lot of kids can identify with this. The idea that people should always live in couples is continually reinforced in kids' books, so that kids are made to feel odd if they're not part of a nuclear family.

What about adults in stereotyped roles? Little girls model themselves on images of women, so how do you handle the problem of representing women in a way that is positive and that challenges the stereotypes, but at the same time is close enough to reality to recognise?

The women are not grotesquely different from what children expect. We don't have women coalminers but there are firewomen and women taxi drivers. The 'one job, two job' pictures and the poster show the reality of women's lives and make it clear that housework is work, yet is unpaid. The next book to be published is about feelings... there's a whole range of feelings never shown in kids' books. Just to show men crying and showing emotions they're supposed to repress is something new, yet it can make sense to kids.

Do you think that it will be easier in the future for other people to publish books like this?

We hope so. Trends in kids' books have changed over the past few years, though of course there's a tendency for both writers and publishers to adapt to changes in society and reflect them as new stereotypes. Still, there are more books with women in strong positive roles and books from a working class perspective, and some are very good. And having these books published has given us a lot more confidence about going on. ●

by Liz Heron



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Employment

State mums

Talking to women in children's homes and 'malad' schools about the work nobody wants

Part of women's work can be seen as policing our own families—keeping the kids in order, instilling into them what they can and can't do, making them conform. As families break down through economic and social stress, this work has been taken over by the state, and many jobs that women do outside the home are an extension of this role. They range from 'professional jobs' like social work and teaching, to low paid service work with no professional status at all.

Brenda, who worked in a children's home in the East End of London, and Elizabeth, who is a helper in a 'Maladjusted School', talk to Jo about their work, how they cope and how they

recently have started to organise around their conditions at work. Both women had been militants before they took these jobs.

Neither of them is supposed to talk to the press, so their identities had to be disguised. This is supposedly to protect the children, but it also conveniently covers up what goes on in our state institutions.

Brenda

J: What does your job consist of?

B: I'm an Assistant House parent, that's the lowest grade here. Both women and men work in children's homes but usually there are more women at the lower grades. There's no job description. We have certain duties like getting the kids up for breakfast, taking them to school, organising their going to the dentist, thinking up recreational activities for them—generally what most mothers are supposed to do, bar cleaning and cooking. The Council gets cleaners and a cook for that. But we have to take over when they are off.

A lot of the work is actually containing the kids. There are many fights and we have to sort these out. The staff shortages

"There are times when I feel like lashing out at someone—even my best mate—just because I miss a family atmosphere . . . '*"

make it even more difficult, so we always work under a good deal of tension. In one children's home the kids had to sit in front of the tele all evening when they got in from school; they weren't allowed to move except to go to the toilet; there just wasn't enough staff to cope. It costs £90 a week to keep a child in care. If this money was given to the parents the child probably wouldn't need to be in a children's home, because most kids are in care for mainly economic reasons: their parents just couldn't cope, or haven't got anywhere to live, or the mother's been deserted by her husband or boyfriend.

J: What hours do you work and what are the wages like?

B: There are two alternating shifts 7.00-3.00 and 2.00-10.00. We get one weekend





off a month, so we have to take most of our free days during the week. The hours are very unsocial, but we don't get paid for working unsocial hours. I take home about £40 a week, which isn't enough for all the work we have to do. Unless you live locally, you are forced to live in and the shift system makes it very difficult to have any social life outside of the home.

"I admire them, because they do give up a lot. I mean they have got to eat with the kids, live with kids . . . They've got a 24 hour job." *

Many women marry co-workers, because they don't get a chance to meet anyone else. A lot of time it means that the staff become very dependent on the home like the children.

J: Why do people do this sort of job?

B: For many women it's a way of getting out of a dead end job in a shop or a factory. And you don't need any qualifications, 'just' to be able to get on with kids. Many of the workers in the lower grades are single working class girls. If you can actually work your way up the hierarchy you can end up getting very good money. There's a high turn-over of staff though, because the pressure's too much, and we get a lot of agency staff who don't stay long. The Social Services

"I think some of the good staff leave because they get a bit fed up fighting the system. The system in one home I was in was that if a kid wet the bed he had to lay in it all night . . . we had this bloke and there were rules like this he disagreed with them and he had to go."

"Some of the good staff leave because they just need a break. Because ten to one the good staff are more popular, and the more it takes out of them." *

are trying to cut down on spending, and they won't advertise the job properly. So it's difficult to get long term residential staff.

J: Is the job unionised?

B: We are all supposed to work together as one big happy family. It's not considered the sort of job you would need a union for. It's the kind of caring-for-people-job and you are supposed to be dedicated and all that. If you have any problems the Social Services, who is our boss is supposed to sort them out for you. These ideas hide how exploited we really are. As a result there has been virtually no unionisation in children's homes.

J: How did you begin to organise around your working conditions?

B: We were approached by our local NALGO branch who wanted to get all workers unionised. I was chosen to be shop steward and a couple of months later dissatisfaction with conditions in our home came to a head.

We got together and wrote an article for our local union paper, with a list of demands around such issues as staff shortages, vacancies not being filled, wanting more workers at higher grades, not enough money being spent on the kids, lack of equipment and workers not being consulted by social workers about decisions concerning the kids.

"We think residential staff should have more say, in everyday things, after all they're the ones who are looking after you . . ." *

The demands were presented to the Social Services who just threw them back in our faces, so we went to the local newspaper which blew it up into a children's home 'scandal' and how Social Services management was making money from the poverty industry.

After this the Council were forced to meet some of our demands. We got three more workers, one at a higher grade. We also went round and talked to workers from other homes, because workers in different homes are very isolated from each other. At these meetings many women got excited because it was the first time their complaints were taken seriously. We drew up a list of priorities that we wanted to fight for, which were mainly against the government cuts and their effect on homes. We need to get all vacancies filled by refusing to admit more children to homes; to stop the council closing down a children's home in the borough and to get upgraded.

Soon we started to have regular meetings in our home between the staff, including the cleaners, who wanted to end the division between them and the rest of the staff, which I think was really good. We also had meetings with the kids about things that directly affected them like bed times, what to do at weekends and discipline—if one of them stole something they wanted to be responsible for disciplining the person.

We began to talk about our role as workers in children's homes. A lot of

staff see themselves as giving kids an 'improved background', which means that they put more emphasis on keeping the kids clean and well behaved than on solving their problems.

Some homes are run on very militaristic lines—the kids are punished for swearing and their rooms are searched every day.

"A home with 80 kids is just not on . . . we need smaller institutions that cater for a group, not where you have a lot of stupid rules like you find in some places, like you can't go upstairs before 8.30pm . . ." *

Also there's a very rigid work hierarchy in homes, assistant house parents who are the majority of workers, do all the work and have most contact with the kids, but have no power. The Superintendent who has all the power just sits in his office all day.

The kids are very sussed out about being contained. They have no power except to needle the staff and this always makes the work situation very difficult. Also, it's generally accepted that you don't express emotions or personal feelings yourself towards the kids. The whole atmosphere is really repressive, and there's never enough staff to give the kids the individual attention they need. Most of them feel really

"And I used to be desperate all the time for my mother and she'd never turn up. A few years, I realised that she wasn't going to come and I wasn't going to get the love because there was too many children for the staff to pinpoint one to care about." *

rejected and can't understand why. It seems the most we can do at the moment is to try and get enough staff with adequate wages to create as pleasant an atmosphere for the kids as possible. We need to fight for our own interests even though it may sound as if we are taking advantage of the kids' circumstances. For example I think we should get danger money like teachers in 'maladjusted schools', because like them we do have to cope with a lot of violent situations.

"Kids set up a member of staff and have a go. A lot of kids last June on the 'Who cares?' day said they'd put the boot in." *

J: Is there such a thing as an 'ideal' children's home?

B: In our society children's homes exist for economic reasons, these reasons wouldn't be found in a socialist society. So the ideal children's home would then be a place where kids could get away from their family, it would be a positive alternative to the nuclear family. At present though, I think we need to fight for more collective control by workers and kids to run homes.

Elizabeth

J: What is a 'Maladjusted School'?

E: The authorities call kids maladjusted when they can't be as easily controlled as other kids in normal schools and won't conform to the behaviour that's expected of them. They label them as 'emotionally disturbed', 'delinquent' etc. The idea is to patch up kids that come from 'inadequate homes': families on welfare, working mothers, neglectful fathers etc. In fact nearly all of the problems these kids have stem directly from their families being poor, rotten housing, unemployment. The 'maladjusted school' tries to deal with poverty by seeing it as personal inadequacy instead of treating the root causes.

Some kids have had such awful lives that they can't cope with the pressures of our education system: large classes, the facelessness of big schools. In some ways they are lucky because in a 'malad school' they get more individual attention; there are tiny classes—no more than eight to a class.

J: What does your job consist of?

E: It's an unskilled service job. It's either teachers or kids we service—like making tea for the teachers or coping with a kid that's freaking out in the playground. When I say to people that I'm a school helper they usually say 'what?'. It's a job that has no status and goes largely unrecognised. We have no particular job description. This is a great disadvantage, because it means we can be asked to do anything from cleaning the floor after kids have made a mess, to taking a class when a teacher's away. A lot of helpers are in fact very skilled and do a whole range of things like teaching or first aid. We are a sort of policewoman-cum-teacher-substitute.

J: What is the basic pay?

E: Just over £1 an hour for full time; it works out at about £28 a week take home pay. People didn't used to get paid in the school holidays; that's because it was considered casual work then. Now we get the option of not working at all and not getting paid, or signing on a retaining file, which means you can get half pay but then they can get you to work in play centres. I really think we should get paid over the holidays like teachers, but I don't expect we ever will.

J: Do you ever get men doing your job?

E: No never. The men are porters or schoolkeepers; that's the only sort of work men do in school apart from teaching. It's only very recently that 'school helper' has actually been considered a proper job. Usually it's mothers who take this sort of job, because it fits in with school hours and you can do it part time.

J: How did you start organising?

E: It's difficult to organise because there are very few helpers in each school; may-

be only two or three. But we had a dispute in our school and this brought all the manual workers—helpers, cleaners, kitchen staff—together. We consider ourselves manual workers, even though some of our work is more that of a low grade teacher.

ILEA schools have a closed shop agreement, but for us this had just meant paper membership, and we hardly ever saw our union officials. I became a shop steward during the dispute and I went around the other schools trying to get the manual staff to elect shop stewards too. This is difficult because a lot of women who work in schools are mothers with kids and don't have the time to take on extra union work.

J: What sort of things are you trying to get?

E: Well we are fighting the cuts for one thing. In many schools helpers are being paid out of something called the Alternative Resources and Uses Fund. They are now cutting this down. Schools have to use this fund for equipment as well, so a lot of helpers will be out of a job when it's a choice between getting new video equipment or keeping on a helper. We are also fighting for local organisation between school manual workers and other public sector workers—teachers, hospital workers, council workers etc, because we are all fighting the cuts and need to support each other. Also we are pressuring for a job description so we can't be pushed around so much.

Since the dispute in our school there has been much more solidarity between the manual workers. We now often sit and have tea together and talk about the cuts, the union and the ILEA. But there's also quite a bit of personal support. And we talk about problems like period pains, or how to cope with being kicked in the head by a kid. The Health And Safety Act doesn't seem to have reached schools yet and we do sustain injuries every day from kids, but there's nothing we can do about it. We are fighting to get the Act applied to schools.

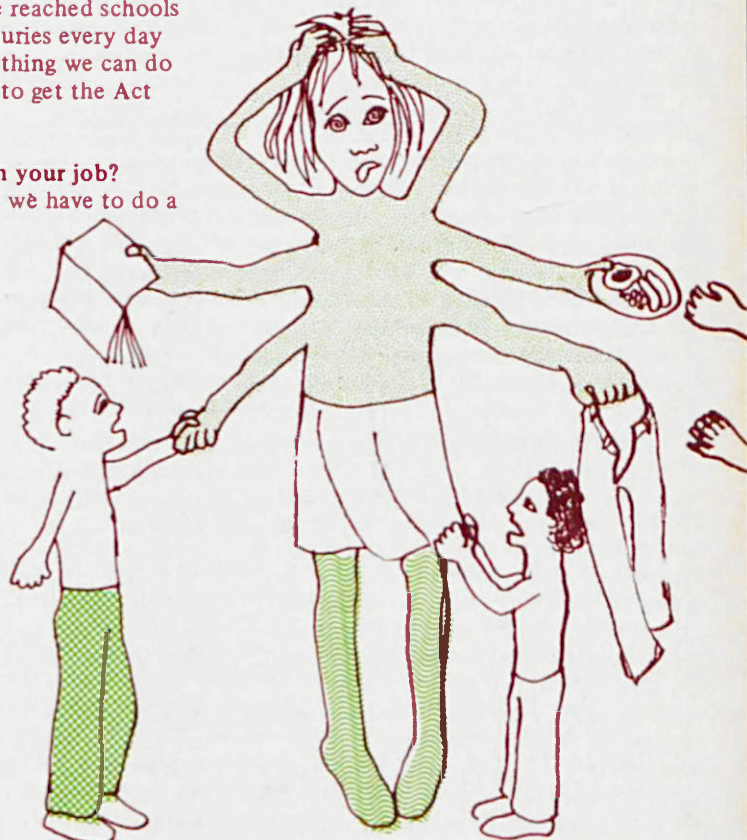
J: How do you cope with your job?

E: It's very frustrating as we have to do a

lot of piddling little jobs like carrying empty milk bottles up eight flights of stairs, remembering how many tea towels have been washed this week, taking the kids to the toilet, washing their pants if they shit themselves. And yet we sometimes have to take on a lot of responsibility like toilet training a kid or looking after particular children for long stretches of time so that we do form relationships with them. But our work isn't often validated by the teachers, who see themselves as the real educators. They won't recognise the effect we can have on the kids. There's a lot of job satisfaction for teachers in a 'malad school', but none for us—no one's ever grateful to us, and the kids often treat us like servants. We are not trusted to read their reports, or consulted about what happens to them, and we do want to be more involved in decision-making. Teachers could learn a lot from helpers and cleaners because we see the running of the school from a different angle. Most of us are mothers, who live in the area whereas teachers tend to live outside it, and we do know something about kids; but teachers consider mothers to be social disasters, especially at 'malad schools'.

It's the union work that keeps me going. I manage to survive in the job now because there's at least some sense of struggle and friendship. □

** In 1975 the National Children's Bureau organised a one day conference called 'Who Cares?' for young people living in care. The 'Who Cares?' Young People's Working Group was set up at the conference to create opportunities for a real dialogue between children in care and adults. The Group have produced a pamphlet called 'Who Cares—Young People In Care Speak Out' (available from National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakely Street, London EC1). The quotes are taken from this pamphlet.*



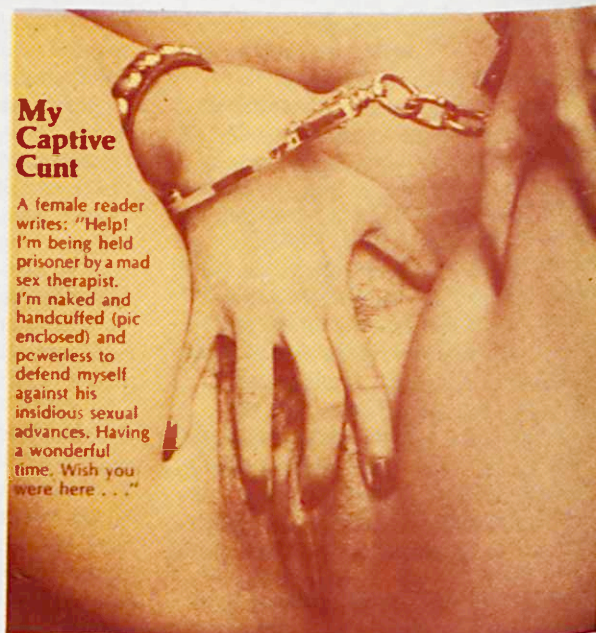
by Ruth Wallsgrove

PORNOGRAPHY

Between the Devil and the True Blue Whitehouse



from *Exposed* available from your local newsagent.



My Captive Cunt

A female reader writes: "Help! I'm being held prisoner by a mad sex therapist. I'm naked and handcuffed (pic enclosed) and powerless to defend myself against his insidious sexual advances. Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here . . ."

from the first British issue of *High Society*

"What I need is a big, stiff cock that's thick enough and long enough to fill me up. And I want the cock to be attached to an aggressive, macho-type guy who's not afraid to give me everything he's got. Some girls prefer gentle affection in lovemaking, but as far as I'm concerned, a bit of brutality belongs in the bedroom."

from *High Society*

I find pornography disturbing, chilling—even sometimes physically disgusting. Must I then be a killjoy, a frustrated prude, secretly longing to write articles on porn so that I can sneak a look while publicly tutting?

I have been, and am still, confused by the distance between my reactions to pornography and the debates carried out in the press about it. Mary Whitehouse and the Festival of Light seem as opposed to what I want for the world as do pornographers. And liberal men who proclaim that the Sexual Revolution has already occurred, and who contend that not only is porn a necessary expression of freedom of speech, but also that it is part of a new freedom of sex, certainly *live* in a different world to me. Freedom of speech?—almost anyone can speak in our society, but only those with money and power can make themselves heard. And sex—they all say pornography is to do with sex, but I feel immediately that it has more to do with power and violence. I like to be sexually aroused, but I don't like pictures of women handcuffed, submissive and inviting the reader to be brutal with them.

Pornography presents women as willing victims, as objects to be used, bodies created for the sole purpose of pleasing men. Even when the women in the stories are acting out lesbian or masturbation fantasies there is never any doubt that

they are really performing for the reader—a man. And when they 'speak' they perpetuate all the old myths of female sexuality. The rough fuck is what they want, none of this boring foreplay or—worse—affection or communication. They are just holes asking to be humiliated and hurt. Magazines present rows and rows of exposed and disembodied vaginas. And this is just *soft* porn. Sado-masochism and child pornography are becoming ever more common, perhaps because men are becoming satiated with straight-forward Page Three of the *Sun* spreads at the family breakfast table.

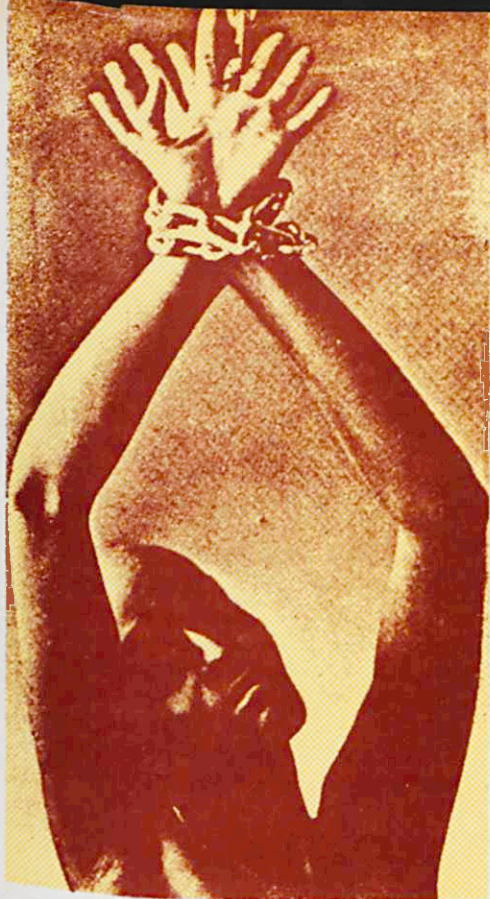
Men must be pretty sick to enjoy fantasising about hurting another human being. But perhaps porn is only fantasy; perhaps men do not act on it. Statistical studies do not show a direct link between pornography and rape. Rapists don't read significantly more porn than do other men, and the incidence of rape seems unaffected by trends in pornography. There is no evidence that porn causes rape directly, and there may be no *causal* link. But they are linked in spirit. Both are manifestations of the same attitudes towards women and sex—of a desire to avoid interaction with a woman as another human being, to have complete control over sex, at best. At worst, to feel and maintain power oneself by making women powerless. Both are elements of

the ideology of the Patriarchy.

So does porn matter? Does it have any effect on me, or other women, or girls, that my local newsagent stocks 20 varieties of pornographic magazines, set out in the doorway, with 20 varieties of simpering, undignified nudes in full colour on the covers? Does it make the men who buy them despise women . . . any more than anything else in our society that degrades women? Pornography can be seen as merely an extension of images of women in adverts, as shiny decorative objects.

But adverts themselves become more and more pornographic. Fashion photographers now take classy porn photos, and the seedy, ludicrous publications in backstreet shops are being superceded by glossies that hold press receptions to announce their first issue. Pornography becomes more intrusive and more threatening in its view of sexuality as it becomes respectable, and as the women in it become glamorous. Perhaps I am missing out on life not having such round breasts and such perfectly symmetrical labia, and not having a macho bloke around . . .

Even if porn were not harmful to women in the street, what of the women who are paid to appear in pornographic films and magazines? It is generally agreed that child—'chicken'—porn exploits and abuses the child models, that children



from the cover of the record *Pleasure* by the Ohio Players

"90% of all pornographic material is geared to the male heterosexual market. Buyers of porn are predominantly white, middle-class, middle-aged married males."

Susan Brownmiller.

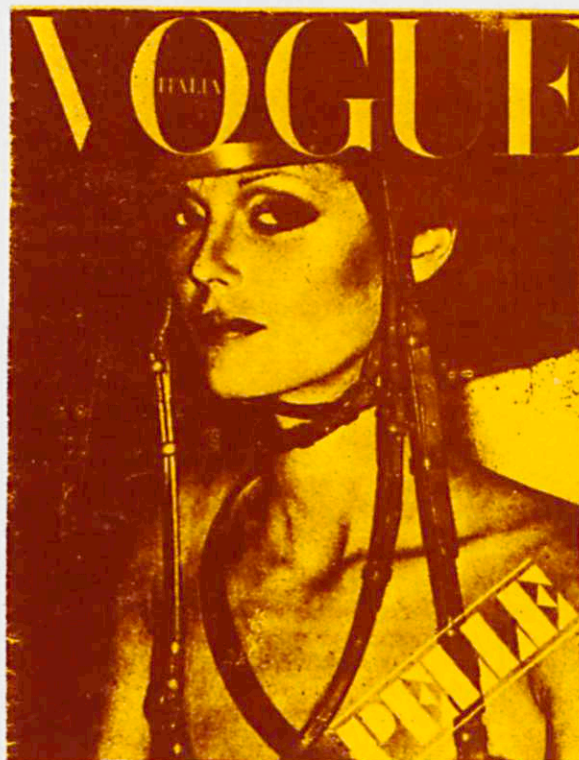
cannot be said to be choosing freely to appear in pornography, and that the experience could seriously mess up a child's sexuality. But the women in porn are freely consenting adults, aren't they? Do they believe in pornography and the view of women's sexuality portrayed in it—or do they just do it for the money? Are they sisters, forced through lack of positive alternatives as women in our society to find employment and importance in porn—or are they traitors, colluding in the degradation of all women for a few quick quid? And what does it do to them? Georgia Stark, an actress in blue movies, was quoted in *Newsweek*:

"The first film I made was really a downer. Afterwards I started to think about suicide. But after a while I got so I could do the Eleanor Rigby thing—you know, leave your mind in a jar by the door. Then I'd know I'm just an animal and they are taking pictures of an animal."

I don't like porn. How then do I differ from Mary Whitehouse? She like me finds porn degrading; in her terms it is anti-love and anti-sex, much of which I disconcertingly find myself in agreement with. She claims to enjoy sex, in its proper place. The reason I believe she and I are fighting on different sides is that she focuses her attacks on things that are not to my mind pornographic at all, but that are

worthy, if not entirely successful, attempts to educate or explore. She is not solely concerned with images that distort, but also with those that try to describe sex as it actually happens. She vehemently attacks sex education in schools, but is

quieter about hard porn in corner newsagents (although she is beginning to campaign against child porn). She became apoplectic over swear words on the Wednesday Play series on TV, some of which plays were remarkably sharp com-



Woman in a 'Sado-masochism' harness

"I find pornography rather arousing at first, but a couple of hours later I feel disgusted and depressed by it," said one woman friend after looking through *High Society*. Some women do find porn—that is *Playboy* rather than *Playgirl* (which in my experience is read only by gay men)—turns them on, and many women have submissive, masochistic or rape fantasies, even though they are fighting in their lives against male domination and physical harassment. And even though they know rape is not a sexual experience, but a painful and terrifying experience of force for the victim. The only model of sexuality and eroticism in our society is the sexist model, and in our fantasies many of us see ourselves and our sexuality through men's eyes.

"Only recently are we beginning to define our sexuality for ourselves. This is an incredibly lengthy struggle, because it is not just a question of changing our conscious attitudes, but also our unconscious ones. The fantasies persist however much we abhor them rationally." Roisin McDonough.

I believe that a feminist erotica is possible; that we can develop writing and photography and art and film that is sexually arousing, but is neither sadistic, nor depersonalised, nor stereotyped, which depicts equal and open sex, which does not depend on furtiveness and guilt—and which puts sex into perspective. But first we must recognise that for many of us the unpleasant attributes of sexist sex are still an integral part of our sexuality. It's not going to be easy.

And what is feminist sex, anyway? Do we want it to be spontaneous, whenever we feel like it with whoever we fancy?—or should it be more than physical, in the context of relationships with people we care for? Should we just let ourselves go, or always be concerned with the consequences of sex?

Nigel Thomas and Carol Slater in *The Leveller* (No 4, March 1977) estimate that almost 50 million pornographic magazines are sold every year in this country, and that over £30 million are spent on openly sold magazines alone.



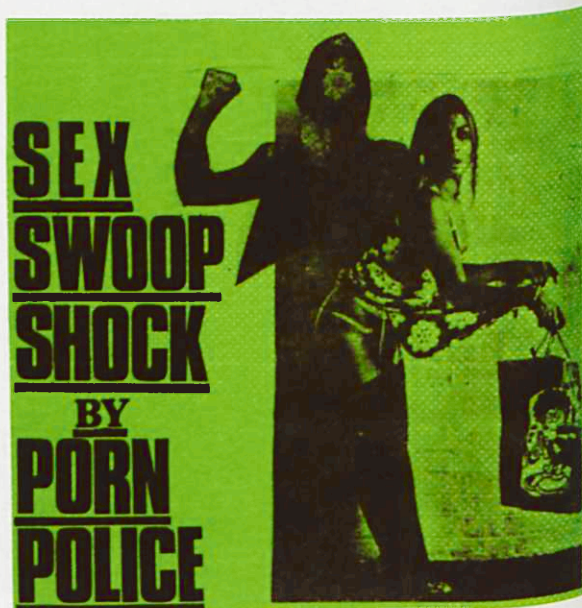
from an article on a series of bubblegum cards in the *Daily Express*, October 8.



Fri 30 Sep
11.15 p.m.
**Trans-Europ
Express**

Robbe-Grillet, author, provocateur and brilliant film maker, shocked many people with this, his second film in which Trintignant plays a drug peddler with sadistic obsessions. *Pariscope* wrote of it, 'The first intellectual film which is erotic, beautiful and funny all at once... the audience will appreciate Marie-France Pisier who is bound with ropes and chains, raped and then slowly strangled before the story ends with the longest nude scene ever shown on screen.' *France 1967/Dir Alain Robbe-Grillet.*

from September programme of the National Film Theatre



front page of a Manchester alternative newspaper

ments on our society. She finally managed to get *Gay News* prosecuted for 'blasphemy' because she could never prove it was obscene; there are many 'obscene' male homosexual magazines, but she concentrated on non-pornographic *Gay News* because it threatened to make homosexuals feel all right about being gay.

She, and others like her, indicate to us the dangers of legislating against pornography. It is not only the most degrading pictures of women that would be banned, but also things that are trying to question or change society's view of women and sex. Contraception information was illegal because it was considered obscene up until the 1930s in this country; and *Spare Rib* itself was banned in Eire this year as 'usually or frequently indecent or obscene'—for demonstrating to women how to examine our breasts for cancer. Censorship laws are always used against those who attempt to inform women about the basics of their reproductive organs, let alone their sexuality, while back street blue movies always find a way to survive.

Mary Whitehouse's reason for attacking pornography is precisely the opposite to mine. She wishes to maintain the sexual status quo, to preserve the stunted roles of women in our society. She is fighting to keep women divided into madonnas and whores, to keep sex disgusting and hidden, to keep women from self-knowledge. She claims to attack porn to protect women, but she does so in the name of the nuclear family and the sanctity of marriage—institutions that oppress women.

I do not know if pornography and the Festival of Light are different sides of the same coin. Certainly both elements have co-existed as far back in society as one looks. It has often been argued—by liberal men—that wherever there is a

restriction on acceptable sex, as in monogamous marriage, there will be a need for safe illicit outlets for men's free-ranging sexuality. A case of men having their cake and eating it. Women, of course, have always had to choose one or the other, between the two male-defined views of their sexuality—between having no sexuality, and putting up with sex as a wifely duty, and being defined totally by sex, as a 'good time girl'. I myself feel caught up in this dichotomy still in my head; between feeling sex is unimportant and unnecessary, and seeing sex as a Life Force, underpinning my every action.

But maybe Mary Whitehouse is losing, and pornography flourishes and grows. Maybe we should all now have the mentality of a golden-hearted whore, who loves like a man, within marriage, buying our husbands 'The Joy Of Sex' for Christmas. Or perhaps porn has got too big for its boots, and is actually undermining marriage; porn is now big business, so perhaps sex itself is becoming capitalistic, moving out onto the market place—with women's bodies as commodities. What then will become of us?

"All the flacks make contracts. Contract sex. It means you agree to put out for so long for so much. You know? Like I have a two-year contract. Some girls got only a one-nighter or a monthly, that's standard. You can be put out on your ear at the end of the month with only a day's notice. That's no life. Course once in a while some real bulger, she ends up with a ten-year contract. I never met one, but I heard of them."

"What happens when your contract runs out?"

Gildina shrugged nervously. "Sometimes they renew. The first time I was on a yearly I got renewed by that flack—he was a

lower-level ground transport smasher. If you're dropped, sometimes you got a prospect. Sometimes you get by on one-nights or weekends till you turn up a prospect. But it drains you. Always worrying about maybe you'll end up in a knockshop. Sometimes you can't keep maintaining, and then your chances of getting even a lower-level flack run down."

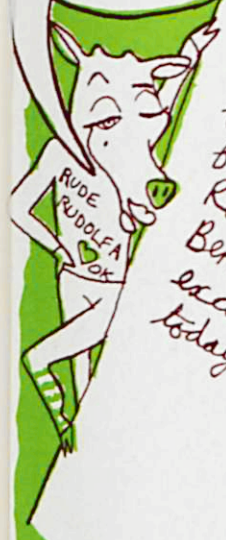
One possible future from Marge Piercy's *Woman On The Edge Of Time*.

I don't want to chose between Mary Whitehouse and the producers of *High Society*, between two equally unacceptable alternatives—between censoring all mention of sex through vaguely worded laws that will be applied by men, and allowing pornography to invade my life at an ever increasing rate, on Radio One and in packets of bubblegum, and even in the radical press. I believe we should not agitate for more laws against pornography, but should rather stand up together and say what we feel about it, and what we feel about our own sexuality, and force men to re-examine their own attitudes to sex and women implicit in their consumption of porn. We should talk to our local newsagents—many of whom feel pressured into stocking porn—or picket porn movies, or walk down Oxford Street with our shirts off. We must make it clear that porn is a symptom of our sexist society, a reflection of its assumptions; that it is violent and misogynistic, and nothing to do with the free expression of 'healthy' sex, but rather the truly 'perverted' desire to trample on another human being. We must choose the third alternative—Women's Liberation.□

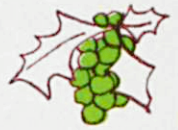
Love and Thanks to Roisin McDonough and Vanessa Cooze, and all who helped on their way past my kitchen table.



A few other things are as exciting, but I can't explain here while people like Mary Whitehouse don't know their mistletoes from their holly berries!



Chez Santa,
Snowsville,
Up the North Pole.



Dear All at Spare Rib,
some people think I'm - I've always noticed that a man!! Lies! All lies! Santa is as much a girl's name as Laura, Lisa or Linda! What do you think, sisters? Is this yet another example of Patriarchal Propaganda suppressing the Female Culture?
I thought you'd also like to hear how we get snowed under by letters from women wanting a Spare Rib subscription for Christmas. In fact I'd say that I and Rudolfa, and all the hard-working helpers at Berkhamsted, think that Spare Rib is the most exciting and long lasting present for women today!

...whereas the QUEEN'S HUSBAND and MICKY MOUSE and DADDY are definitely men's names, and... SANTA BARBARA is a place in California..... and.....

Much love & sisterhood,

Santa Claus (Mo.)



3 COUPONS



TO: Spare Rib Subscriptions,
C/O Linda Phillips,
114 George Street,
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire.

Dear Santa, please send my friend a year's subscription to Spare Rib.

Friend's Name:

Friend's Address:

Gift From

TO: Spare Rib Subscriptions,
C/O Linda Phillips,
114 George Street,
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire.

Dear Santa, please send my friend a year's subscription to Spare Rib.

Friend's Name:

Friend's Address:

Gift From

TO: Spare Rib Subscriptions,
C/O Linda Phillips,
114 George Street,
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire.

Dear Santa, please send me a year's subscription to Spare Rib.

Name:

Address:

SPARE RIB SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR ONE YEAR: UK £5; EUROPE £6.50; AIRMAIL ZONE A (Middle East) £9.50/\$16.50; ZONE B (USA + Africa) £10.50/\$18.00; ZONE C (Far East) £11.50/\$20; SEAMAIL (Anywhere) £6.50/\$12.00
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